









## **SOME PROSE WRITINGS**



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BY

W. CAREW HAZLITT

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## A FOREWORD

THREE of the papers, "Robin Hood," "Whittington," and "Faust," here reproduced with material alterations, were originally contributed to a volume entitled "National Tales and Legends," 1892, and are included in the present volume with the obliging permission of Messrs. Swan Sonnenschein & Co. In connection with the paper entitled "Babyology," I contributed some remarks on the history of Tom Thumb a year or two since to the *Burlington Magazine*.

W. C. H.

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# CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. ODYSSEUS . . . . .	I
II. ROBIN HOOD . . . . .	7
III. WHITTINGTON . . . . .	26
IV. FAUST OR FAUSTUS . . . . .	30
V. ANNE BOLEYN . . . . .	40
VI. BUNYAN . . . . .	52
VII. DR. JOHNSON . . . . .	59
VIII. COLERIDGE . . . . .	68
IX. TENNYSON . . . . .	86
X. MISTER JOSEPH MILLER . . . . .	101
XI. ITALY AND ENGLAND FORMERLY . . . . .	107
XII. SOME DEEPER USES OF POPULAR LITERATURE . . . . .	114
XIII. FAME . . . . .	127
XIV. THE SUBJECT CONTINUED . . . . .	143
XV. ON PERSONS WHO HAVE DONE ONLY ONE THING . . . . .	161
XVI. FORM . . . . .	179
XVII. WRITING AND PAINTING . . . . .	195
XVIII. BABYLOGY . . . . .	209
XIX. ERRATA . . . . .	217
XX. BEN TROVATO . . . . .	230
XXI. ROYALISM OR SOCIALISM . . . . .	254
XXII. THE THOUGHT OF OTHERS . . . . .	276
XXIII. SOME LATE AND LIVING AUTHORS . . . . .	290
XXIV. NOT UNCOMMON PEOPLE . . . . .	306
XXV. NEMO . . . . .	329





# COLLECTED PROSE WRITINGS

## I

### ODYSSEUS

THE contribution by Mr. Stillman several years since to the columns of the *Century Magazine* of the fruit of his personal researches into the topography of the "Odyssey" prompted me to form a few speculations on the authorship of that and the companion epic and their relation to the putative creator.

The "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" stand on a different footing in regard alike to their respective character and the condition in which they have come down to us. Of the "Iliad" it is truly difficult to determine how much or how little is actually original. Smith's Dictionary warns us that we are to use caution in studying the work, but does not afford any specific indications of the portions or passages probably introduced at a far later period. The "Odyssey," while it may have well undergone recension and other editorial processes, presents the appearance in a far higher degree of homogeneity, and is apt to prove in the eyes of many the more attractive production, from its personal and melodramatic cast.

If the Greeks in the Homeric epoch—the ninth century B.C.—were a people ignorant of geography and of the art of writing, as it is generally supposed that they were, the natural question arises whether Homer, granting him to have been an individual, could have really left behind him in any shape the works with which his name is commonly associated; and it becomes an allowable ground for discussion whether the poems are not of later date, collected by men, including Homer, in whose time the old oral conditions were in full vigour and completeness, and identified as Homeric, and Homeric only, through the mersion of all the ingatherers of the scattered legends in a person and a name to some imperfect extent in the same manner as so much of the ancient Gaelic saga is designated Ossianic.

## ODYSSEUS

It is at once obvious that the Homeric narrative plunges *in medias res*, and that we are dependent on the account which Odysseus gives to Alcinous, almost at the conclusion of his trials, for the slight knowledge which we possess of what happened to him after his departure from Troy.

The duration of the return journey is, no doubt, as fabulous as that of the siege of the city, and is to be accepted in the same sense as almost all other ancient chronological estimates; and it should be noted, in corroboration of this view, that the periods occupied in the transit from point to point, are, on the contrary, computed by days. The ten years' subsequent pilgrimage was a meet complement to the ten years' investment of Troy. Such measurements of time are in harmony with the lax and vague calculations which are familiar to us in the pages of the Old Testament and throughout the literature of the East.

Farthermore, in the account of the meeting between Odysseus and his father in the field, we get a clear indication that the former was a ruler or chief of a subordinate type. The Ithacan *regulus* or *τύραννος*, who probably conducted to Troy a very small body of followers, lands on his native island alone. All of those who had been his companions in the earlier stages of his voyage fell victims to shipwreck or other casualties; but the number, as I have ventured to think, was at no time considerable; nor am I a partisan of the old idea that the slaughter of the Greeks by the mythical Læstrygonians, and the destruction of their vessels, were as extensive as Homer avers.

When it is borne in mind that of the suitors of Penelope as many as four-and-twenty were contributed by Cephalaria, and that the circumstances connected with Odysseus must have been perfectly well known there, it seems natural to wonder why, in a place so close at hand as the so-named Phæacia, the returned warrior was not generally recognised until a local bard suspected his identity, and led him to unveil himself, according to Homer, by narrating the tale of Troy in heroic strains. Of course this may be taken to vindicate the ordinary opinion as to the great lapse of years since the departure from Ithaca; but, on the other hand, the want of ready means of communication was apt to assist forgetfulness. Nor is it much, if anything, to the purpose that Telemachus did not know his father, since he must have been a child when the king left home.

In Homeric days the minstrel's ditty may have comprehended past as well as current events; but if it existed at all in the pre-Homeric era, in so highly developed a shape as to embrace a large piece of history, it probably confined itself to what had more or less recently taken place; it appears still more reasonable to conclude that in this case Homer has transferred to a prior age the manners of his own, when there was sufficient culture to lay before the men of Greece, through the medium of song, the achievements and transactions of bygone epochs.

The tale of Troy, whereat Odysseus is seen to weep, his consequent discovery, and the recital by him of his exploits and mischances, have the air of a tangled thread of fact and invention, in which the latter appreciably preponderates. If, on the one hand, the absence of the king had been so protracted as to be matter of history, the elaborate account which he furnished to a neighbour could have barely been necessary; and if, on the other, the chronology is incorrect and exaggerated, a prince whose territory was almost adjacent could not very well have failed to identify a contemporary so eminent and famous as the husband of Penelope. My own impression, arguing from analogy and the ostensible circumstances, is that the time covered by the Trojan War and the arrival of the King of Ithaca home has been greatly overstated.

The episode of Irus is somewhat provocative of criticism, inasmuch as in a primitive society of very limited population the presence of a professed beggar seems unlikely and suspicious. In such a political system as that of Ithaca under Odysseus one would suppose wealth to be comparative and mendicity almost unknown.

I begin to doubt whether the participation of the Ionians in the movement against Troy was at all general. Even Odysseus required a good deal of persuasion before he was induced to join the expedition. But if Ionia did not supply many fighters, it supplied one man who was of enormous value as a sagacious and intrepid commander, and (long after) a second, who committed to imperishable verse the whole engaging story.

The Ionian origin of Homer is strikingly and weightily attested by his palpable conversance with the country round about Ithaca and with the little island itself. When we have crossed with him by the homes of Calypso and Circe, of the Cyclopes and the

man-eating Læstrygonians, even into what is called Phæacia, we cannot help feeling that we have passed from an atmosphere of fable and hearsay into one of actual observation. You must remark that he refrains from anything approaching exact geographical detail or local colouring, until he has brought his hero to ground which he was able to describe from more or less intimate acquaintance. The interview with Eumæus, the meetings of father and son and of husband and wife, the banqueting scene, the episode of Irus (recalling an earlier feat by Odysseus of a similar kind), with the way of life of Penelope and her female attendants, are realistic enough, and contrast rather powerfully with the anecdotes which the author puts into the mouth of his principal figure, where the latter sums up in retrospect. I even believe that I have come to something resembling history when the Ithacan reaches Phæacia, and the princess is introduced to us with her maidens washing their clothes in the stream. It is a glimpse of primæval manners and of patriarchal government.

Inasmuch as Homer elected to devote to Odysseus—a single *dramatis persona* in the war, and by no means the most conspicuous—an entire epic, and, again, as the poet makes the exile, weary, one might imagine, of delay, recount his homeward-bound experiences at Phæacia, and spend some time at a point so near to his final destination, I ask myself whether the author was a Phæacian familiar with Ithaca or *vice versa*; and, balancing one consideration against another, it is really difficult to decide which of these two views, if either, is more likely to have been the true one.

Ionia appears to have been the cradle of several of the old Makars.

That part of the picture which represents the phalanx of aspirants to the queen's hand, revelling indefinitely at her cost in all the plenitude of savage hospitality, exhibits a remarkable illustration of antique palatial life. A large proportion of the candidates, if such a place as Cephallonia sent four-and-twenty, must have been men with whom it is not strange to find Penelope temporising. All this portion of the narrative is singularly vivid and graphic.

It will be perceived that in the "Odyssey" the form *Kephallenes* occurs instead of *Kephallenia*. But it was the ordinary rule, if not in Homeric days, at all events in those which succeeded,

to merge the locality, as it were, in the population; and hence, by way of example, for *Bruttium* and *Leontium* we get *Bruttii* and *Leontini*.

But Homer was a debtor to his imagination or to the fertile brains of his informants, when he portrayed the one-eyed anthropophagous Polyphemus and all the other marvels which fill the earlier cantos of the epic. Doubtless his illustrious traveller met with many romantic incidents, and also with many a fair admirer to whom his homage was something more than platonic. In the enchanted abode of Circe the stratum of folk-lore superincumbent on fact is sufficiently transparent to permit us to judge for ourselves with what kind of fiction we are confronted in the reputed transformation of men into swine. The Greeks could scarcely have encountered on their route from Troy any cannibals, unless it was when they were driven far from their course, and landed involuntarily among the savages on the African coast, denominated in the poem Læstrygonians. But Homer took his knowledge of Polyphemus at second-hand. To me he appears nothing more than a member, possibly the chief, of some pastoral cave-dwelling tribe on the Sicilian seaboard.

Portions of the subject-matter of this metrical romance are very probably much older than its composition; such legends as it presents to our consideration were doubtless familiar long before Homer's time; and the primitive life and thought of which scenes are described, seem to belong to the first period of Hellenic development. But it was to the favourable reception of the "Iliad" that the appearance of the sequel was owing. The latter was a curious mûsaic of superstitions, oral tradition, and broad historical reality, a tolerably faithful picture of what the author knew, pieced to a sublime embodiment of current Ionian notions under a popular name.

It is to be supposed that it is, in the case of the "Odyssey," the immense distance of time which leads us to overlook at first the comparative nearness of place. The scene of those parts of the great poem, which are historically and humanly the most important, lies among those same islands which were not long since under British rule, and where, within the compass of a summer vacation, any intelligent explorer may still discover numerous vestiges of an age coeval with Homer and not very far removed from Odysseus. Yet long before our time Ithaca itself—the modern Thiaki—had

become a desert, and all traces of its Odyssean importance and interest seem to have disappeared.

I have made these remarks at the hazard of finding myself forestalled by Homeric specialists, with whose views and discoveries I may be unfortunate enough not to be acquainted; but a perusal of Mr. Stillman's interesting papers suggested the few paragraphs of commentary which are here set down.

I shall, however, entertain the hope that I may have proved as congruous and pertinent as the late Mr. Gladstone, who expended much vain ingenuity in establishing a link between the Homeric traditions and the Mosaic; which seems to me a more romantic hypothesis or speculation than that of the descent of the dead language of Cornwall from the speech of ancient Judæa.

## II

### ROBIN HOOD

1. IN dealing with this ancient and favourite tradition, the editor has for the first time made use of such material only as appeared to him authentic, and has discarded all the more recent theatrical, May-day, and ballad-mongering superstructures on the original group and sequence of incidents. Ritson, and after him Gutch in an even larger measure, have swollen the bulk of their respective publications by the indiscriminate admission of every scrap, good, bad, and indifferent, bearing the name of the outlaw, where there was frequently no actual relationship to his personal history, and have consequently assisted in imparting an erroneous conception of the few known facts to the English reader. Ritson was by far the better critic of the two; but the information at his disposal was still more imperfect than ours, and he laboured under the initial mistake of placing the hero of Barnsdale too early, and of attributing to him associates and exploits with whom and which he could have had nothing to do.

The researches of the Rev. Joseph Hunter, and the critical labours of Thomas Wright and others, have contributed very importantly to rectify our view and estimate of this fine and imperishable episode; and it is difficult to understand how any real service is done by persistence in exhibiting the few genuine remains, in this case, encumbered and disfigured by discordant literary interpolations and after-growths.

The true foundation for a narrative of the transmitted incidents in the career of Robin is the "Little Geste of Robin Hood," a piece too well known to require farther description; and there are certain auxiliary lights, which permit us to amplify the somewhat scanty record supplied by that precious relic, in the shape of a handful of separate ballads preserved in MS. and print. Such are the "Tale of Robin Hood" from the Cambridge MS., "Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne," and "Robin Hood and the Potter." Even



## ROBIN HOOD

this selected matter has required a great amount of rearrangement. In the original versions the sequence of events is often evidently erroneous and confused; and, for instance, the epic of the "Knight," which forms the introductory scene in the "Little Gest," is improperly placed before those ballads which describe the earliest meeting between Robin and his two associates, Little John and the Curtal Friar. The editor of the "Gest" seems to have had no eye to chronological or critical propriety, nor was it to be expected that he should.

The first portion of the ballad of the "Potter" is doubtless ancient and genuine; but the central feature in the latter half is common to the anterior story of "Hereward the Saxon." The notion is borrowed by Peele, in his play of "Edward I." (1593); and in his case it was evidently a recollection of a ballad now no longer known in print, and by the merest accident transmitted to us in an unique MS.

Of "Guy of Gisborne" also it is difficult to doubt that there was, at one period, a printed text of very early date, since it is more likely that Dunbar, who died about 1515, was indebted for his knowledge to a record in type rather than to a tradition or a MS. At present we merely know Guy from a single circumstance in his apparent employment by the sheriff of Yorkshire to capture Robin. But, according to Dunbar, he was himself a person of similar stamp, and possibly it was a case of setting a thief to catch a thief, just as the king, when he pardons Adam Bel, makes him his bow-bearer or forest-keeper. Gisburn or Giseburn is on the Ribble in the West Riding of Yorkshire, a few miles from Skipton, and was the seat of a Priory before the Dissolution. Its name and that of Guy seem to be connected.

A point which may be worth notice, by the way, although it is perhaps tolerably obvious, is that in the course of the present story, not only the sheriff of Nottinghamshire, but of Yorkshire, plays a part. In the ballad of "Guy of Gisborne," which lies in Barnsdale, Guy is in fact a scout, employed by the sheriff to track Robin, and obtain a clew to his whereabouts; and of course the functionary for one county would have no jurisdiction in another.

In the interlude of the "Four Elements" (1519), and again in Udall's translation of the Apophthegms of Erasmus (1542), is cited a piece entitled or commencing, "As Robin Hood in Barnsdale stood"; this is not at present known as a separate broad-

sheet. But it may well be identical with the tale of "Robin Hood and the Knight," with which the "Little Gest" opens, but which all the evidence conduces to refer to a later stage in the life of Robin, and which has a certain parallelism with the traditional legend of the Lee Stone. No doubt, many pieces belonging to this epic have perished altogether, or survive in a degraded form. The virtuous folks of other days exhorted their contemporaries to disregard such instruction, and to study theological lore, as when Walter Lynne, in a dedication of Roy's "True Belief in Christ and His Sacraments" (1550) to the Duchess of Somerset, assures her that it is a work of a very godly character, suitable for universal reading, unlike the tales of "Robin Hood," "Clim of the Clough," &c. His true period was soon a matter of doubt or indifference. In the earlier literature of England and Scotland he became associated with men, who lived centuries afterward—with Wallace, Adam Bel, and the Pinner of Wakefield. But whenever and wherever he had lived, he remained the people's hero, and survived on both sides of the Border in ditty, ballad, and play, and in May game. In the fabliau of "How the Plowman lerned his Paternoster," printed by Wynkyn de Worde, we get the impressive line :

"They songe goynge home warde a Gest of Robyn Hode."

In Wager's play, "The longer thou livest the more fool thou art," there is the snatch—the salvage of something more lost—"Robin, lend me thy bow." Barclay alludes to him in his "Ship of Fools" (1509); in the sixteenth century songs about him were recited to the accompaniment of the harp; and about the same period Bishop Latimer lets us understand that the common people held Robin Hood's day in greater respect than any discourse from him.

In 1469, one hundred and twenty-five years after his death, the leader of the Rising in the North took the name of Robin of Ridesdale, and sixteen years later the Earl of Northumberland and his followers are described in the Plumpton Correspondence as meeting King Henry VII. "by the way in Barnsdale, a little beyond Robin Hood's Stone."

As regards the pieces affiliated on the legend, such as the "Noble Fisherman," the "Tinker," the "Shepherd," the "Forester," and others, while there appears to be no authority

for associating them with Robin, they represent the ever-varying succession of adventures and incidents to which the career of an outlaw was open; and we have in these stories circumstances which, if they did not happen to him or his comrades, may have befallen others similarly situated, with whose names it would have been less profitable to connect them. At the same time some apparently genuine productions, like "Robin Hood and the Potter" and "Robin Hood and Allen-a-Dale," are liable to the suspicion of being partly indebted to existing traditions of earlier adventurers; and I apprehend the second part of the "Potter"—a Barnsdale story—in Gutch, to be as unauthentic as it is totally improbable, while "Robin Hood's Golden Prize," though perhaps genuine, is, so far as I can see, merely an altered text of the "Two Black Monks" in the "Gest."

Hunter was the earliest to fix with a greater air of probability the period to which Robin Hood belonged. Our older antiquaries had been content, as a rule, to accept the ballad-mongers' vague notion that he lived in the days of the Crusades and Richard of the Lion Heart, and this loose theory responded to the popular conceit that he was as real a personage as Robin Goodfellow, and sufficed the catchpenny presenter on the stage down to the present time. He was thought, again, by many to be an abstraction or type, around which the professional caterers for the public entertainment had collected a body of minstrelsy; and even his very name, which we now know to have been usual enough, was regarded as open to doubt and conjecture. Yet with all this scepticism there was a certain circumstantiality, which went so far as to confer on him a title, to provide him with a noble wife, and to bestow on his resting-place a dated epitaph.

In rejecting those portions of the Robin Hood ballads which I judge to be destitute of authority, and to be no more than literary compilations of a later period written for the stalls, I follow the example of the restorer, who removes the modern plaster from old cathedral walls, or him who, beneath a worthless mediæval text, brings to light a lost or rare classic. Even those pieces to which I have had recourse, such as the "Little Gest" and "Robin Hood and the Potter," while they are substantially of the highest curiosity and importance, were clearly the work of illiterate scribes; and this is more predicable of the MSS. even than of the printed matter.

Mr. Hunter arrives at the conclusion that Robin Hood was in the service of one of the dependents of the Earl of Lancaster—probably an archer—at the Battle of Boroughbridge (about twenty miles from York), fought on the Tuesday and Wednesday after the Feast of St. Gregory, 15 Edward II.; the name does not of course occur on the extant contemporary Roll, which limits itself to the Knights and Bachelors present; and the same gentleman thinks that subsequently to that disastrous event he with others sought refuge in the extensive woods in the neighbourhood of Wakefield, where persons of his name then lived, and to which he doubtless himself belonged. He was a man tolerably advanced in life at this time, and was married to one Matilda—not the Lord Fitzwalter's daughter, but an individual whose name occurs in a coeval document. The Hoods, prior to the loss of the Lancastrian cause at Boroughbridge, appear to have been persons belonging to the yeoman class, and to have been well connected, especially if it be the case that they claimed near consanguinity with the De Stayntons, who were tenants under the Crown *in capite* of the small Honours of Pontefract and Tickhill, and of whom a female member, Elizabeth de Staynton, was prioress of Kirklees.

The prevailing idea about Robin Hood is that he spent the whole of his adult life under the greenwood tree, and only retired to a nunnery when he needed in his last moments medical assistance and the services of a nurse. But such a view seems to be wholly inconsistent with the truth. Robin passed his youth and early manhood at or near Wakefield in peaceful obscurity with his family or his wife, and was already a middle-aged person when he sought the new home, where his worst enemy was “winter and rough weather.” Nor is it to be supposed that he remained steadfast to one place during the period of his retirement from society. He shifted his quarters, as we know, from Barnsdale (near Wakefield) to Plumpton in the same county and to Sherwood in Nottinghamshire, either from the love of change or for greater security and concealment. For to his original delinquency as an adherent of the Earl of Lancaster or as the perpetrator of some such act of violence as drove young Gamelyn and Adam Spencer to the wood in Chaucer's tale, he by his new course of life added that of a poacher and freebooter, and (above both) a despoiler of the hierarchy; and with the assistance of a small band of faithful confederates, which from time to time increased in number, he

succeeded for a season not only in eluding pursuit, but in maintaining himself and his followers in comparative ease, and in relieving the needy.

The space occupied by the epic in its pure state and by the forest life of Robin is narrowed by Mr. Hunter to about twenty months. I am disposed to incur the risk of questioning such a view, inasmuch as the earliest glimpse gained of the hero finds him in possession of a limited retinue, it is true, but of a full treasury and of every evidence of power and prosperity, and the "Gest" expressly states that he led a life in the woods "two and twenty years"; nor is it for a moment to be taken for granted that the existing literary records are complete or consecutive. My impression is that the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1323 occurred long subsequently to the adoption by Robin of a secluded and lawless existence, and that that event merely contributed to strengthen his resolution and to swell the ranks of his adherents. It goes without saying that Barnsdale, which I clearly apprehend to have been the first and for some time sole field of his activity, was under any supposition the haunt of dangerous characters before his day, and we can produce testimony to establish that in the last year of Edward I. that part of the road from Scotland to the north was notoriously and specially insecure.

It may not be altogether a futile speculation to inquire whether the exceptional precautions adopted to protect life and property in 1307 were directed against Robin Hood or against anterior and independent enemies to the king's peace, when taking back twenty-two years from 1325, the reputed date of his decease, brings us to 1303. But we owe, above that, a very respectful consideration for that well-known passage in the "Vision of William concerning Piers Ploughman," written by William Langland (who might have seen Robin) among the Malvern Hills about 1350, where the author makes Sloth, one of his characters, say :—

"I cannot perfectly my paternoster, as the priest it saith,  
But I can rhymes of Robin Hood and Randal Earl of Chester."

And with these two lines before him I invite the reader to ask himself whether the allusion in the same breath, as it were, to an historical personage like the Earl of Chester and to the Yorkshire yeoman does not import something more than the transient

experience of the forest and outlawry signified by Mr. Hunter's delimitation. Such a wide popular repute could scarcely have been acquired in those days of difficult communication in so brief a time as a year and a half or so in such a sphere of adventure. But it is worthy of particular remark that at a distance of only a quarter of a century from the date of his death he was already a hero of song; this helps to establish the authority of some of the traditional accounts and remains.

Not merely in the *prima facie* evidence furnished by the "Little Gest," where it speaks of the reception of the knight in the first fit or section, but in the precepts which the outlaw delivers to his subordinates for their guidance, we discern traces of lengthened standing and of former footprints in Nottinghamshire, with embittering recollections of its sheriff; and I can hardly avoid the conclusion altogether that Mr. Hunter has improperly curtailed the duration of the story, and that the mention in "Piers Ploughman" is due to achievements spread over a much longer period.

Under any circumstances whatever, Robin Hood has accomplished the most signal triumph which has ever fallen to the lot of an Englishman. By virtue of unique attributes and under very extraordinary conditions he has earned an imperishable name, one which is part of our history and our birthright.

Two centuries and a half after the composition of "Piers Ploughman," a verse-writer of the reign of James I.—Drayton in his "Polyolbion"—sings:—

"In this our spacious isle I think there is not one  
But he hath heard some talk of him and Little John;  
And to the end of time the tales shall ne'er be done  
Of Scarlock, George a Green, and Much the miller's son;  
Of Tuck the merry friar, which many a sermon made  
In praise of Robin Hood, his outlaws and their trade."

And here we are, at a distance of 560 years from the epoch, with the ballad-hero constantly in our thoughts and on our lips. He went to his grave toward the close of Edward of Carnarvon's reign without a suspicion that his country would care for his reputation as dearly as for the memory of Magna Charta, of which he was a practical exponent and supporter. For in an age

"When those may take who have the power,  
And those may keep who can,"

he upheld the poor man against the tyrannical or usurious oppressor. He was a political heretic, and in a sense a religious one, since he did not allow his pious sentiments to blind him to the abuses of the yet unreformed Church and the overbearing insolence of the higher ecclesiastics. But his extraordinary fame came to him unsought, for had it not been for the ruin and proscription of his family and friends, he might have continued to the last a Wakefield yeoman, and have been buried with his fathers. The force of circumstances led him to retaliate for his outlawry by becoming a maker of history, and by inducing successive generations to exhaust their ingenuity in settling his personality and his period.

The nearness of many of the adventures of Robin Hood and his comrades to the Scottish border might account for the early popularity of the ballads in North Britain, and for the "Little Gest" being among the first productions of the parent Edinburgh press in 1508, apart from the sympathy of the countrymen of Wallace with the political principles held by Robin; for he was not so much an opponent of the Church as of the hierarchy, not so much of monarchical government as of feudal oppression and rapacity.

As it is, the edition of the "Little Gest" published in Scotland may or may not be anterior to that by Wynkyn de Worde. But it is quite possible that the latter printer executed one before his removal from Westminster to Fleet Street in 1502. So many of these more ancient typographical monuments have perished or at least so far failed to come to light, just as the Scottish edition of "Sir Eglamour of Artois" in 1508 at present takes precedence of the English-printed texts, and yet most probably was taken from one.

If in his political sentiments and principles Robin leaned in the direction of socialism, it must be remembered that it was a very different state of parties, of which he was a witness and contemporary, from that which at present has to reckon with the socialist as a problem and a danger. The Barnsdale outlaw saw before his eyes only two main orders or ranks of life, the patricians and plebeians. The great Middle Class, which has made England what it is, and which can alone maintain us in our position as a State, could be hardly yet said to exist as an active political factor; and Robin laid down for himself the rule and maxim, not that

all were equally entitled to share the national lands and wealth, but that the circumstances justified him in holding the balance between those who were too rich and those who were too poor. He was an unparliamentary redistributer.

The impotence of the civil authority in Robin's days is strongly exemplified by the impunity which our hero enjoyed during his term of sojourn in Barnsdale and elsewhere, and by the advantages which he gained in his occasional encounters with the municipal and even royal powers. The vast, uninclosed areas of woodland, the absence of an organised police, and the popular sympathy, had much to do with the success of the outlaw in evading detection and baffling pursuit.

I have spoken of the sophistication of the story by the later writers for the popular taste, where a perpetual demand for novelties created the necessity for changing the *venue*, and enlarging the true scope of the story. It is even easy to see how characters like the Pinner of Wakefield and Adam Bel were introduced into the idyllic drama as contemporaries and coadjutors of Robin; they were both of the same neighbourhood and the same religion, and even an educated man such as the author of the "Polyolbion" unsuspectingly (unless it was by poetical license) makes them members of the band.

It is not very surprising, however, to find in the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries such a lax and uncritical treatment of the subject, when we cannot peruse with care the compositions so much nearer the events described without detecting inconsistencies and oversights. The "Little Gest" itself, produced in the reign of Henry VII., asks re-editing, before it is capable of being used as part of a fairly chronological and authentic narrative.

The Robin Hood cycle of ballads presents the aspect of having furnished the parent-stock, whence the authors of all the other effusions of the kind, and primarily "Adam Bel," derived their inspiration and material. For several of these pieces outside the actual Barnsdale or Sherwood series possess a similarity of texture and treatment, and, although other parts of the country were densely wooded at that remote epoch, and afforded equal scope for the illustration of forest-life and scenery, it is noticeable that (with one or two exceptions) the whole of this family of legends is associated with the north of England and with Scotland. If



we may compare small things with great, we are perhaps entitled to presume that out of the few incidents which the really ancient ballads in print or MS. embrace, the extensive collection in our hands gradually developed itself, just as the "Iliad" or the "Odyssey" may have grown to what we see them from slender *prima stamina* or germs. Two other legends with which Robin is not personally identified, such as the "King and the Hermit," recently re-edited by Albert Kurz of Nürnberg (1904), and "King Edward and the Shepherd," undoubtedly belong to the same group and the same region. They all tell a similar story.

The normal Robin Hood ballad, written for the meridian of the stalls, conveys the impression of having proceeded, if not from the same pen, from the same type of composer. It is couched in a trite and monotonous phraseology, neither in keeping with the topic nor with the period, and in some instances one is manifestly an evolution from another, with variations for the nonce.

Among the pieces inserted in their collections by Ritson and Gutch as possibly connected with this series, I confess that I discern nothing to the purpose. The story of "Robin and Gandelyn" is merely some passage in the careers of two foresters, who, like Robin Hood, were poachers of the king's deer; and the name of one of the individuals has been wrongly given as Robin Lyth, because the stanzas commence with the words "Robin Lyth in greenwood bounden," the second word being not a proper noun, but a common verb, *i.e.* "lieth."

When we hear in the ballads of his removals from one place to another at a considerable distance, we must take into account the very restricted facilities for travelling in the fourteenth century, and the aggravated difficulty which would present itself in the case of a man who was outside the pale of the law, and on whose head a price was not unfrequently set. Migrations from Yorkshire southward could only be accomplished by night or in disguise, and it was impracticable for the outlaws to transfer themselves to points many days' journey apart without great caution, and even then at serious risk, as they would be necessarily divided and liable to detection at halting-stages. We may, in fact, take it for granted that an exodus from Barnsdale or Sherwood was not undertaken before one of those retreats had grown untenable for the time.

It may strike some as one of those tasks which are better

let alone, that of proving almost beyond doubt who Robin Hood was, when he flourished, and how prosaically his fortunes ended ; it may be treated as a piece of indiscreet supererogation to tell how such a man, toward the close, failing in health and strength, accepted service under the Crown, and how, after a few months, he was compelled to seek medical or surgical aid in the priory, of which a relative was lady superior, and where he died from over-bleeding through the treachery, it is alleged, of Sir Roger of Doncaster, a priest, may-be, who had been one of his involuntary guests in Barnsdale formerly.

The history of this "Little Gest" seems to be that it was formed into a connected narrative out of a certain number of separate legends in MS. or in oral recollection by a north-countryman, who was conversant with the haunts of the outlaw on the outskirts of Wakefield and in the vicinage of the Watling Street, and who asserted his editorial pretensions by inserting here and there a few introductory or connecting stanzas. The narrative at the very outset represents the hero as harbouring a deadly resentment against the sheriff of Nottingham, so that at the point where the tale opens we are bound to infer that much has happened without leaving any vestige behind, and that the "Little Gest" is a garland, beginning abruptly, and plunging us *in medias res*. But the starting-point of the adventures must surely have been in Barnsdale, not in Sherwood ; and although Robin is usually considered a Nottinghamshire celebrity, whatever glory appertains to him is more properly a Yorkshire inheritance ; for it was thence he sprang, and there, at Wakefield or in Barnsdale and Plumpton, that he spent the greater part of a not very prolonged life.

The special interest and value of the "Little Gest" are manifold. It supplies us with items of information or portions of the epic nowhere else preserved, and not only shews the popular view of the subject, so far as it goes (for it is not exhaustive), nearly four hundred years ago, when oral tradition was capable of supplying a writer with a fairly genuine conception and report, but preserves, so far as the exigencies of metre and space allowed, the language of MS. versions of still older date, to which the editor of the "Gest" had recourse, and of which fragmentary remains only at present survive. We also perceive that at the end of the fifteenth century the outlaw was

associated with Nottingham, rather than with Barnsdale or Plumpton.

The editor of the "Gest" not unnaturally and not injudiciously (from his immediate point of view) placed the incident of the "Knight" in the foreground; but I see reason to differ from that arrangement, as the adventure was clearly one belonging to a more advanced epoch in our hero's career as an outlaw.

The "Gest" is the sole attempt, which we are at present aware of possessing, at a consecutive relation; but it is, as may be readily perceived, imperfect in many respects. "A Tale of Robin Hood," printed by Gutch from the unique, but incomplete, Cambridge MS., is simply the Nottingham episode, embracing the capture of Robin and his heroic rescue by John. It obviously appertains to the later period of the epic, when Robin was a familiar figure at Nottingham as well as at Wakefield, and when his renown, moreover, had so strongly impressed the king, that his uppermost thought, when he heard of his detention in the hands of the sheriff, was, not his punishment, but a supreme desire to see so famous a character, who had so long set at defiance his bow-bearers and keepers and the bodyguards of his subjects, as well as his executive officers in more than one shire.

Robin's career appears to have commenced, as it closed, in Yorkshire. The middle portion is chiefly occupied by scenes laid at Nottingham or in Sherwood. There the closer proximity to an active executive jurisdiction in the person of the sheriff of Nottingham brought the outlaw most frequently in peril of his liberty and life; and from the stress which he is traditionally alleged to have laid on unrelaxed hostility to the sheriff, we are probably justified in concluding that there was some early grudge in that quarter which Robin never forgave.

If we accept the view of Mr. Hunter in regard to the chronology and habitat of Robin Hood as broadly correct, we find ourselves in a position, after the lapse of all the years between the first quarters of the fourteenth and twentieth centuries, to fix with remarkable exactitude the area and radius of his movements, so far as the theatre of his earliest exploits is concerned—Barnsdale and its environs. He lay, in fact, within an easy distance of that portion of the Watling Street which ran through Barnsdale, and he relied for plunder on the travelling parties which made this highway their route from Lincolnshire to Yorkshire; and the deep

forest on all sides furnished to men familiar with every yard of ground a secure ambush and concealment. The compiler of the "Little Gest," or the author of the ballad of the "Knight," even lets us understand that the point on the Watling Street nearest to the outlaw's rude home in the forest was once known as the "Sayles," although no such place is at present distinguishable. The independent evidence of the narrator imparts a strange reality to the incident in the "Gest" where Little John and two others are despatched by their master to look out for a victim, who proves to be the distressed knight, and to whom the outlaw, instead of robbing him, lends a large sum of money to save his property from forfeiture.

I must proceed to submit a conjecture, which strikes me as of sufficient force to justify adoption, that the meeting with the two monks and that with the knight have been transposed, as the possession of so large a sum as even four hundred gold crowns was unlikely, in the absence of some unusual piece of good fortune immediately precedent; and this may also help to explain the profusion of viands set before Sir Richard. The outlaws had had a good time. They can even afford to make their more recent visitor a handsome return for his thoughtful present of bows and arrows.

I discern in Sir Richard at the Lee (or At-Lee) a man of honourable character and unusually liberal sympathies, whose secular leaning was naturally more pronounced after his bitter experience of the cupidity and uncharitableness of the abbot of St. Mary's. He played a hazardous part in those days of clerical ascendancy and despotism, and we are far from being perfectly acquainted with the duration and extent of his relations with Robin Hood, while of his ultimate fate we seem to be so far ignorant.

Mr. Hunter seems to create an unnecessary difficulty, in treating the episode of the "Knight," by concluding or presuming that his residence was in Yorkshire, where Robin and he first met. But he was then merely on his way to York to negotiate an extension of grace from the abbot of St. Mary's. After the repulse and pursuit of the outlaws at Nottingham on the occasion of the second archery meeting, Robin and his men take shelter in the castle of a knight, who is expressly said in the ballad-poem to be the same whom Robin had laid under such weighty obligations, and who evidently had a seat near Nottingham. The writer of

the ballad calls it Utersdale, which may have been the name of the house or the locality. But Mr. Hunter thinks the ballad wrong, because a person of equestrian rank was not likely to possess two mansions in different counties. The fact is, that we do not know that he did; and the evidence is in favour of his abode being near Nottingham.

It is improbable that the yeomen had such familiar relations with two personages of the same rank. The "Little Gest," drawn up from still earlier records, pronounces the owner of the place near Nottingham to be identical with the recipient of Robin Hood's bounty. The king waits till he reaches that town, or at least that county, before he declares Sir Richard's estates under attainder. After his evacuation of his castle, the knight retires into Sherwood, and is there pardoned by Edward. The whole *venue*, except the casual meeting in Barnsdale, is within a radius of Nottingham.

There is another point dependent on this precise localisation of a part of the tale. As early as 1307 Barnsdale already enjoyed, we perceive, the repute of being a dangerous stage in the journey to the south; for we are told that when three dignitaries of the Scottish Church were on their way to Winchester under a royal escort, that escort differed from time to time according to circumstances, but when they arrived at Pontefract, on the confines of Barnsdale, it was raised to the maximum of twenty archers. The co-eval record says that this was "propter Barnsdale." But if a score of bowmen was accounted an adequate protection for such an exalted party, we naturally turn our thoughts to the force which Robin Hood is averred in ballad-lore to have had constantly at his command, and which could have readily overwhelmed the guard at its fullest strength. There is no difficulty in believing that the outlaws fluctuated in number according to circumstances or requirements; in the commencing sections of the "Little Gest" not more than four appear. To calculate by the score was a common kind of hyperbole; and I must confess myself incredulous as to the existence of a body of one hundred and twenty or even one hundred and forty armed and desperate men, where their cardinal object and policy were to avoid notice, and to supply their deficiency in force by their tact, fidelity, and intimacy with the ground; nor should it be overlooked that they were principally persons of a rank superior to the common soldier. Never-

theless, on special occasions, it is quite possible that Robin Hood could rally together all the stout fellows within reach, and verify the five or seven score of song. As a rule, such a following might have proved a source of actual weakness, from its proneness to favour treason as well as publicity; and it is worth noting that throughout the story there is no hint of betrayal or disloyalty beyond one or two little brushes between Robin and his rather irascible lieutenant. The point deserves emphasis, because it illustrates and proves the moral ascendancy of Robin over a body of men, some of whom at least were his superiors in physical prowess.

One word more. The entry above quoted belongs to 1307, an early stage in the development of the machinery by which Robin set himself against the law; and we find that, later on, when the high cellarer of St. Mary's passed through Barnsdale, his escort was raised to fifty-two, and even that number was totally inadequate to protect him.

My conclusion, upon the whole, is that the normal following of Robin limited itself to Little John and half-a-dozen others, and that when, upon information received, any remarkable emergency was expected, additional forces were collected by an understood and accepted principle of summons—not by bugle (for that was merely a rallying call varied agreeably to circumstances) but by message. It is against probability, as it would have been against policy and prudence, that a large body of men, not amenable to the law, should have been constantly mustered in one spot or centre. Robin seems to have sounded the bugle once only for Little John; three notes were understood as a signal to the whole band, and probably two carried some intermediate significance. The Lincoln green, which they wore, perhaps, only in full dress, was obtained without much difficulty from the pedlars or itinerant traders either on Yorkshire or on Nottinghamshire ground, and these men might traverse the forest without risk, as the outlaws were enjoined by their leader to leave such persons unmolested.

The situation of the outlaw in the woodland in those early days was of necessity less isolated than we may sometimes be apt to suppose. For his clothing, a portion of his diet, his tools and weapons, medical and surgical assistance, he was brought into periodical contact with the bordering towns and villages, of whose inhabitants he not seldom enjoyed the private sympathy; we see how in the "King and the Hermit" the holy man bartered

bread and ale for venison with his nearest neighbours ; the present of bows and arrows from Sir Richard at the Lee was merely an exceptional windfall ; and we see that Robin himself and John, if not others, ventured into Nottingham, and occasionally also into Wakefield, on urgent or special occasions. Robin had a wife, and possibly children, and some of his comrades may have been similarly placed ; and in one instance we see that he proceeded to the county town to pay his devotions in the church of Our Lady there. As a Catholic, he naturally missed the services prescribed by his ritual ; and the celebration of prayers or graces before meals by Friar Tuck or otherwise, if it was a reality, as affirmed in the "Gest," made indifferent amends for the privation.

We hear little, indeed, of the friar beyond the mention of his first encounter with Robin and accession to the party ; and it is only by implication that I assign to him the function of priest-chaplain. He makes a more prominent figure in the plays and "Polyolbion" ; he does not occur by name in the "Gest" ; and it is possible that he did not long survive, or that he seceded.

The "Gest" makes Robin build a chapel in Barnsdale, which is not so unlikely ; it may have been an inexpensive wooden structure, similar in appearance to many still visible in primitive localities ; and the officiating priest, if not Tuck, was perhaps some not too fastidious priest at a modest stipend or a character of the type portrayed in the "King and the Hermit."

In more or less immediate connection with this portion of the subject, it may be worth while to refer to a sermon of the fourteenth century, that is to say, just about the Robin Hood era, preached by a parson who has been robbed on the highway, and who makes his discourse an *elogium* on brigandage. He receives his property back, and a gold noble for his fee. The adventure may, of course, have no relationship ; but the period accords, and the particulars are characteristic.

There is one aspect of the forest life of a proscribed character such as Robin Hood, which has never perhaps been much considered, and which directly bears nevertheless on his day-by-day existence. What, in short, was the nature of the shelter which the woods could be made to afford, and, while it was sufficient to protect from the weather, could be without serious trouble replaced at different points ? The hut or cabin of the keeper might be a permanent structure, however humble and limited ;

but the outlaw was not entitled to look for lengthened sufferance, and was at any moment liable to the seizure of his effects and the demolition of his retreat, even if he succeeded in eluding personally the officers of the sheriff or the soldiers of the king. The ideal picture of Robin and his merry comrades under the greenwood shade, regaling on venison and wine, and entertaining monarch and prelate, has often made me speculate on the scene in winter, in the drenching rain, in the deep snow, amid the wild hurricane—in the hour of sickness, and in the peril of death.

From a casual allusion or so I collect that the outlaws kept their venison, wine, ale, and other provision, if not their habiliments, in caves, only known perhaps to themselves, and not improbably of prehistoric antiquity, although that discovered in Whittlebury Forest, Northamptonshire, about 1671, was of more recent construction; after the accession of the sheriff of Nottingham's cook, they enjoyed the opportunity of having their food properly dressed; and for fresh water they resorted to the forest streams, or perchance (when they were in Barnsdale) to the well which still bears the outlaw's name, and is singled out by Mr. Hunter as probably a genuine link with Robin and his men.

We arrive at no definite authoritative clew on this point, since even in the early part of the "Little Gest," where Robin receives a guest at "the lodge door," the expression is merely that of the editor of the poem. But the incidence of the case bespeaks frequent removals and transfers, and consequently a temporary and inexpensive description of refuge from the weather, and storehouse for provisions and effects. The stores of all kinds always on hand, including changes of dress, disguises, and weapons, demanded receptacles at once spacious and secure; and it was now and then the case, that a considerable amount in specie, the fruit of some lucky adventure, called for special safeguard. We have only to throw ourselves five or six centuries back to realise in our mind's vision tens of thousands of uninclosed acres, where small structures could be placed, if they did not already exist, out of the common track, and practically invisible to the uninitiated.

Nor is even that process requisite, since at the present moment, in the New Forest and elsewhere, men conversant with all the intricacies of the denser portions continue to reside years together in huts or cabins constructed of timber and thatch; and such



## ROBIN HOOD

persons become hardened to the weather, and enamoured of the freedom, till they are intolerant of an ordinary roof.

The densely afforested condition of England and Scotland, both during and long after the mediæval epoch, made possible a defiance of the law which would now be scarcely maintainable for a day or a week (as the case may be) ; and the strict and jealous preservation of game, with the limited knowledge of plantation, rendered silvan life, again, more secure from the reluctance of the officers of the Crown to destroy cover. The forest folk-lore or romance, which we possess, was, like everything else of the kind, the product of favouring circumstances, which can never recur.

The men who ranged themselves round Robin, and shared his privations, enjoyments, and triumphs, were such as the Ridings of Yorkshire, and the north of England generally, are still capable of producing : long-backed, broad-shouldered, tall fellows, who were a match for all comers in muscle and pluck ; and even " little " Much the Miller's son was not improbably, if deficient in stature compared to the rest, of the Rob Roy build. The men are yet on the ground ; but the spirit and conditions have disappeared.

In the fourteenth century it was a practice to confer names referrible to a physical peculiarity, both here and abroad. Little John himself might have been so called from a personal characteristic, just as we find Long Will and Long Jack ; but the form at all events became usual both as Littlejohn and Micklejohn. Again, another of the band, Gilbert of the " White Hand," suggests the remark that this distinction may have been allied to the French " Blancmains."

As regards Plumpton Park—when the " Gest " was written and printed, the residence and property of a family of the same name—it was in the Plantagenet time an open woodland and a royal chace, and doubtless originally formed part of the great forest of Knaresborough or Kennardsbury, of which the sole remaining trace is, I believe, the Stray at Harrogate, *i.e.* the Harrow Gate, or way, of that domain. The editor of the " Gest " terms it a park, because he knew it as such.

After his brief service at court, perhaps about the end of 1323 or the beginning of 1324, it was to Barnsdale, not to Sherwood, that Robin retired to end his days. There was his true *patria*, his native place and air.

The peculiar wildness and seclusion of this district in the fourteenth century, even in comparison with Sherwood, is exemplified by the apparent freedom from molestation which the outlaws there enjoyed. We do not hear of any incursions into it by the sheriff of the county, nor of any of those narrow escapes which Robin and his followers experienced in the Sherwood country.

Of the cause of his death, probably in the spring of 1325, we get a meagre account; but it is nowhere stated that, looking at the not very lengthened interval between the reported failure of his health and that desperate enterprise for saving the life of Sir Richard at the Lee, the over-exertion was sufficient to impair the system of a man doubtless advanced beyond the prime of life.

Of Simon Hood, presumably a relative, and a participator in the royal grace of 1323-4, our cognisance is limited to the mention of his name as a recipient of pay as a valet or groom of the chamber.\* If he, which is almost certain, shared Robin's fortune in the woods, his name nowhere occurs in the ballads.

### III

#### WHITTINGTON

(1350-1424)

THIS tale is one of the series which every literature creates and possesses, with the twofold object of supplying the immediate demand for novelties, and of providing historical personages of more or less remote date and antecedents with a biography. The most familiar example of this mode of treatment is the romantic particulars which used to pass current for incidents in the life of Shakespear, even after critics had abandoned in despair the attempt to throw much real light on his career. We cannot wonder therefore that, in the case of a man who died in the first half of the fifteenth century, and whose transactions were chiefly recorded in unpublished civic muniments, we encounter a puzzling mosaic of myth and truth, which on analysis is shewn to contain a very small residuum of trustworthy matter.

We may take it as established that Sir Richard Whittington was the son of Sir William Whittington, member of an ancient family in Gloucestershire, and dame Joan his wife, and that he was born in London in or about 1350. He married Alice, daughter of Hugh Fitzwarren. In 1379 we find him contributing to a City loan, and ten years later giving surety to the chamberlain for £10 toward a fund for the defence of London. He was successively common-councilman for Coleman Street, and alderman for Broad Street, Ward.

In 1393, being then on the court of aldermen, he was chosen to be one of the sheriffs of London; and at nearly the same time he became a member of the Mercers' Company, incorporated by Richard II. in the year just named, not improbably through his or his father's agency. By letters patent of June 8th, 1397, on the death of Adam Bamme in office, he was appointed by the king Lord Mayor of London *ad interim*, and at the ensuing Michael-

mas was formally elected by the City for the next year. In 1406 and 1419 he again served the office, proceeding on the last occasion to Westminster to be approved and admitted by the Barons of the Exchequer. In 1415 he formed one of the civic procession which went on foot to Westminster to return thanks for the victory at Agincourt.

In 1393 Whittington was probably already a wealthy and influential man, and we have it on undoubted authority that he was patronised both by Richard II. (deposed in 1399) and his uncle Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, Lord High Constable of England (murdered in 1397). It was toward the close of his long and useful life that he formed the design of perpetuating his name by certain monumental works. In 11 Henry IV. (1409-10) we find him receiving the royal leave for the foundation in St. Michael's Paternoster in the Reole or Royal, of his hospital or *Domus Dei* for thirteen poor men, who were to pray for his good estate and that of his family and friends, which was in ancient days a customary provision, and continued to be in vogue down to the sixteenth century; and in the following year the corporation gave him the ground for his College. Stow, in one place, states that he began to build the library of the Greyfriars in 1421 at a cost of £400; but it seems to be doubtful whether he lived to complete all his grand projects of improvement and goodness. For he died in the beginning of the year 1423, his will being proved in March, and his four executors appear to have at all events finished the College, and to have paid for the repairs of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Guildhall. It was in his last mayoralty that he reopened Ludgate as a debtors' prison, in compassionate regard for reputable citizens, whose health was endangered by the noisome state of Newgate; and where the old historian of London speaks of him having built Newgate, we are surely to understand its restoration or reconstruction on an improved model.

Whittington was buried in the church of St. John the Baptist, or St. John upon Walbrook, and his remains were twice disturbed: first, for the sake of ascertaining whether some great treasure was not originally deposited in his tomb; and, secondly, to encase the bones in a more secure and becoming manner.

The professional occupation of Whittington as a mercer, perhaps in succession to his father, was almost unquestionably the source of his manifest opulence; and it has been suggested that the cat

story, which was in existence before his time, arose from an imperfect apprehension of the import of the word *achat* or *acat*, the term then commonly employed in French for the sale of merchandise or mercantile transactions. The mere circumstance that Whittington's father was a knight bespeaks him a person of some consideration and standing, and the reference to Richard II. and the Duke of Gloucester in connection with the younger Whittington's benefactions may shew that the family rendered financial assistance to the Crown, and obtained some equivalent.

But it must strike any one, who reflects for an instant, as a strange caprice of fortune that in the commonly accepted accounts of Whittington we hear of many things which he never did, with an altogether false conception of his origin, and, granted the premises that he rose from a very low station to power and riches, are left very imperfectly informed of his philanthropic munificence and exemplary nobility of character. In him the Gild of Mercers had and have their most illustrious member and one of the most important contributors to their aggrandisement.

The earliest allusion to Whittington in our literature appears to be a story of a dream which he had after the foundation of his college, and which is preserved in a jest-book of 1526. It is not worth repeating, and down to the reign of Elizabeth, when Stow published his *Survey and Annals*, nothing beyond a vague legendary impression of the man prevailed. Stow explicitly refers to the conditions attendant on admission into the alms-houses, and Heywood the dramatist, about the same time, in the "First Part of Queen Elizabeth's Troubles (1605)," repeats Stow's account almost in so many words. Yet in the face of this evidence a play was produced, in which the anonymous author founded his plot on Whittington's low birth and great fortune, and down to the present instant the favourite notion is that which is fostered by the chap-book and the pantomime. The striking antithesis was not to be lightly surrendered.

Let us see that Whittington constitutes a rare type of legend. We can understand the superstructure or incrustation of fable on the genuine histories, such as they may be, of the gods and heroes of antiquity, of prehistoric kings, of great warriors in the age of chivalry, of early navigators and explorers, of students of literature and science in illiterate and unscientific times, and of enemies of the Church in various ways ; but here we are confronted

with a sober London merchant of the Plantagenet period, for the leading events of whose beneficent life we have fairly reliable *data*, and whose memory is preserved in the popular mind by a nursery tale, barely entitled to serious discussion. It was the usual incidence of Eastern romance to accomplish results by a *coup de main*; it suited the dreamy, despotic, and inert Oriental temperament. The Arabian inventor would not have succeeded so well if he had depicted fortunes acquired by life-long industry; and even we in the West cherish this sort of imaginative illusion, when it is brought home to us, when it is affiliated on a veritable alderman and mayor of London, on some actual and breathing merchant-prince, a practical man of business, a benefactor of his species. He must owe all that he had and was to wedges of Barbary gold, earned for him by a cat, in a region where that animal, so far from requiring importation, was already abundant.

The chap-book to which I have above referred, adopts the view of the hero already laid before the public in a play no longer known, although the writer quotes Fabian, Harding, and Stow, and, in fact, pads his little book freely with matter not directly relevant to Whittington from the annalists of London. At the same time Heywood, in a drama printed in 1605, and acted earlier, repudiates the fiction as to Whittington's origin, and follows Stow.

Every family must have a beginning. There is a possibility that we have to go a generation back in quest of the poor boy who attained riches and spurs by his commercial enterprise, and that it was really Sir William Whittington whose birth was humble, while it does not follow that the cat legend might appertain to him any more than to his son, the Whittington of history. The confusion between him and his father is rendered more plausible by the absence of the name of the latter in any list of civic officers and proceedings. He may have been merely a prosperous, self-raised merchant.

#### IV

### FAUST OR FAUSTUS

THE material for judging the true character and attributes of this remarkable individual is chiefly preserved in a German prose book of 1587, when about half a century had elapsed since the death of Faustus. Beyond this source of knowledge we have one or two accidental pieces of testimony on the part of persons who either saw our hero or had heard of him in his lifetime ; and on this information we have to found our estimate of the alleged magician, for, as I shall explain, the dramatic creations of Marlowe and others, no less than the popular theory, are, one and all, more or less unfaithful to reality. If Faustus could revisit the earth, he would be more astonished than flattered by the injustice which literary and theatrical restaurateurs have done him.

A second pseudo-biography, which purports to be the work of an English student at Wittenberg some fifty years after the time, takes serious exception to its predecessor ; but it appears to be, on the whole, an inferior production, and to have been very loosely and clumsily compiled. It is neither a supplement to the earlier text nor a revision of it, but a wholly distinct assemblage of stories and adventures, arranged without any ostensible regard to propriety or sequence. Beyond these two empirical attempts to satisfy public curiosity, and anterior to them both, however, was a strange account of a young girl at Nimmwegen in Holland, who was a sort of female counterpart to the German hero, and whose history forms a small chap-book printed at Antwerp in 1514, and of which an English version appeared there about the same time. Mary of Nimmwegen is represented as having been the Devil's paramour during seven years, and so far, except that the Evil One was a conspicuous figure in the story, we have here the converse of the German legend, where he employs others as his instruments, and is personally superior to temptation.

The partiality and veneration for the supernatural and weird

which have constantly manifested themselves in the professors of demonology and witchcraft, as well as in those who have gained an indirect knowledge of such studies by hearsay and guesswork, readily explain the estimate which his contemporaries formed of Faust or Faustus, and the discrepancy with our present conclusions as to the nature of his employments, his power, and his fate.

It was not till Faustus had been nearly half a century underground that the idea occurred to a German romancist of utilising all the current popular myths relating to him, and others of the same stamp, for literary purposes; and there appeared at Berlin in 1587 a volume professing to recount with fidelity the transactions of that rather brief and still more obscure and uneventful career. The book was calculated to tickle the palates of readers to whom the very name of a retired student of a former generation would be in many instances new, and of whose character and achievements the author might confidently propagate the wildest fictions and extravagances with impunity and profit. During the lapse of fifty years all those who were acquainted with the truth had died, and there was no school of analytical criticism to dissect and estimate a plausible tissue of chimerical or mischievous inventions, vamped up jests, and affiliated matter of all kinds.

Under the name of Faustus we find five impersonations: (1) the Faustus of real life, so far as we can make him out, the son of poor parents, studying at first for holy orders, then digressing into the occult sciences, and questioning cardinal points of theological doctrine; a shy, secluded scholar, of whose pursuits and opinions few had any correct knowledge: living almost in solitude, and dying under conditions which favoured the report that he had been strangled by the devil. (2) The Faustus of German prose fiction, in whom the natural course of things concentrated all the marvels and prodigies current in oral tradition from want of better information, and to lend an air of freshness to a string of fables and jests in circulation about Eustace the Monk and other earlier men of similar tastes and endowments. (3) The Faustus of Marlowe, substantially founded on the prose story available in English in or before 1592. (4) The sentimental Faustus and Margaret of Goethe. (5) The caricature Faustus of operas. A notion of the view entertained, at least in England, in regard to



## FAUST OR FAUSTUS

the aspect of such a personage as Mephistopheles (and the general conception of that of the Devil himself was not dissimilar) is to be gleaned from the rough woodcut on the title-page of Marlowe's drama in the old editions.

In order to be in a position to understand the actual facts, which are few enough, we have to try to forget that Faustus ever became a hero and central figure of romance, a puppet, which each succeeding age and school of fiction felt at liberty to turn without scruple to its own account. I am dealing with a biography, which seems to have extended from 1491 to 1538. Faustus died comparatively young; he is made in the story to lament his premature fate. He was born at Knütlingen in Silesia, and breathed his last at a village near Wittenberg. He could have barely reached his forty-eighth year.

The circumstances attending the birth and education of this distinguished and enlightened man are narrated with tolerable fulness in the history of his career. His relations were evidently anxious that he should go into the Church, and his youthful studies were originally directed to such an object. But the learning which he acquired in this manner operated in inspiring him at once with a distaste for the calling and a misgiving as to many points of religious belief. The influences, which led to the Reformation in Germany, had begun to operate, and to spread scepticism and unrest. In 1509, when Faustus was a lad of eighteen, Luther, eight years his senior, was delivering lectures at the newly founded University of Wittenberg, and may have numbered Faustus among his hearers. The freer discussion of religious questions developed a variety of effects. It had diverted Luther himself from the study of the law. It diverted Faustus from entering the Church. He relinquished the project of joining the clerical body, and proceeded to devote himself to the study of medicine, with which at that period astrology and alchemy were commonly associated.

Of his real progress in his new profession we know next to nothing; but it is said that he, like many other physicians, became at one time a compiler of almanacks and prognostications; and a considerable portion of one epoch of his life was spent in foreign travel. He visited, besides various parts of Germany, France, Italy and the Levant; but the extent of his observations and experiences are, I suspect, overstated in books, the product of hearsay or reading on the part of the early biographer. But it

is very notable that the observation which the narrative of 1587 makes Faustus offer upon Venice, Coryat in 1611 almost reiterates, as if he had seen the translation of the German volume, and had unconsciously carried the notion in his mind.

He was fond of pleasure; his temperament was voluptuous, and his imagination lively and warm; and he met with many strange adventures, even casting aside the apocryphal incidents which are vulgarly coupled with his name.

We have to exercise a good deal of moral self-restraint, if we desire to realize this man to ourselves as he probably was. The first hint of anything approaching to solid ground occurs in a conversation of Melanchthon respecting him, reported by a third party in a volume printed two years after the reformer's death. Melanchthon was born at a village not far from Knütlingen, and was the junior of Faust or Faustus by several years. He is made to refer to his studies in magic, to which he had been led by attendance at public lectures delivered on that science, and he speaks of his attempt at Venice to fly, and of the devil accompanying him in the likeness of a dog; but he does not even glance at the varied and elaborate exploits which he performed, or at the compact with Mephistopheles.

Melanchthon, as a Churchman, merely cherished, perhaps, a loose persuasion that his contemporary was a freethinker, and so qualified himself for becoming a liegeman of the devil hereafter, and even a correspondent with him during life. Much of this entered then, as now, into common parlance.

The testimony of Melanchthon is valid, at any rate, to the extent of establishing the existence of Faustus and his veritable place of nativity. But he was also personally known to Paracelsus, Cornelius Agrippa, and Konrad Gessner, three men of congenial pursuits, though not sharing his strong passions and manifest proneness to sensual indulgence. The alchemists of Germany, in whom Faustus must have taken a powerful interest, if he did not participate in their researches, were of course men far in advance of their time, and were, in fact, the founders of the modern European school of chemistry.

The ignorance of physical laws, the want of communication and of the means of diffusing accurate intelligence of events, contributed to accredit to the devil any incident which passed the common comprehension. His majesty was heir-general or

## FAUST OR FAUSTUS

remainder-man to all occurrences for which no key was forthcoming. Our early literature is replete from the first with prodigious accounts of his intercourse with us and his lively interest in our affairs. In 1641, a Coventry musician of parsimonious disposition was said to have made with him such another bargain as Faustus, and to have come to a similar end, "to the terror and amazement of the inhabitants." He made his presence sensible in a diversified form to innumerable persons, chiefly in humble life, whose account of the conference or vision was faithfully reported in type, and you were referred to eye-witnesses of undoubted credibility, if you wished to inquire farther. Other cases are those of Francesco Spira of Cittadella, which I shall mention again, of Lewis Gaufredi, published in 1612, and of Giles Fenderlin, mentioned in the Trial of Mrs. Joan Peterson, 1652.

The singular revelations, which Faustus was invested with the faculty of conjuring up and making subservient to his desires, may have owed their origin to a vivid and unbridled fancy, in the same way as the imaginative vagaries which we see in the pages of Dante, Poliphilo, and our own Blake, all having their prototypes in Virgil and Homer, as these had again in the Hebrew and Chaldaean visionaries. The descriptions of heaven and hell, in the picture before us, are evidently elaborated dreams or reveries.

A habit of solitude, whether in fact or in sympathy, is apt to throw a man on his own internal resources, and to favour the realization of spectral and other illusions; the supposititious objects which he embodies by intellectual incubation supply the place of ordinary companionship; and where the mental fabric is not sound, or where the process of solitary contemplation is too continuous, insanity often accrues.

The seers and prophets of antiquity were men of the same cast as Faustus, but with a less keen relish for life and a narrower insight and reach. They were as imperfectly understood by their contemporaries, perhaps, as he was by his. During the middle ages there was a strong and not unnatural tendency toward unhealthy rumination, in large measure owing to secluded habits of life; and it survived till the Renaissance or even later, as it is easy to see, not only in the case of wild, morbid enthusiasts; like Bunyan, but in that of such a practical intellect as Cellini

the artist, who narrates in his autobiography an experience not unlike those in the present narrative. The legend is not merely an embodiment of the current faith in necromancy, but an adaptation of it in its more familiar forms to dramatic exigencies.

Looking at the channels through which intelligence of Faustus and his doings might have reached posterity, we naturally turn to his servant Wagner, to whom he left his books, and who must have enjoyed a better opportunity of knowing the extent of his commerce with magic and the black art than any one else. But it is tolerably plain that (with one exception) no use was made of this source and material in framing the account, which was the superficial popular idea of the man, coloured by prejudice and distorted by time; and if we needed a farther illustration of the unscrupulous application of folk-lore to biography and history, I might cite the absurd attempt to palm on the public, about 1712, a German compilation, pretending to describe the life and actions of Wagner, who plays the same part in the Faustus story-book as Miles does in "Friar Bacon."

At the same time, we have always to recollect that the school of biography to which the old account of Faustus appertains considered it a legitimate, or at least a safe and advantageous, feature in their work to heighten the colour or shadow of the portraiture which they presented to view by a free use of borrowed accessories; and some of the achievements of the Knütlingen wizard are mere reproductions of thirteenth and fourteenth century German folk-lore.

The conception of the grandeur of Lucifer and his original rank in heaven, as second only to God in power and glory, is worth remarking, as one of those hints which may have assisted to form in the mind of Milton an idea of the devil at variance with the popular theory.

When the comic business and horse-tricks were inserted by way of attraction in the earliest surviving record, they had already become matter of tradition; yet, notwithstanding, we are entitled to believe that Faustus permitted occasional trespassers on his privacy and, both at home and in his foreign travels, mixed with all sorts of personages, from crowned heads to good creatures wishful to convert him, and he gratified some of these with an exhibition of his skill in legerdemain, palmistry, and astrology.

He was even willing to be interviewed by individuals who sought enlightenment on some point of ordinary science, and he rarely sent them away without a solution. But he did not, it is presumable, admit any participator in his enjoyment of the beauty of Helen of Troy and other famous heroines: these were phantoms of his own seething brain, creatures of his dreams; and it is more than possible that we are indebted for them to wilfully exaggerated entries in manuscript diaries, which may have existed in 1587, when the first pseudo-biography came from the press at Berlin.

The accounts of the circumstances attending his death, which are somewhat conflicting, and which bear the strong impress of clerical bias and manipulation, represent him as having been found with his neck twisted, or with his brains dashed out and his body mangled. The probability seems to be that he committed suicide in a fit of despondency, and possibly, as his remains are described in one place as lying in the court-yard, he threw himself out of an upper window. We see that Christian burial is mentioned as a concession.

Curiously enough, in 1581, a drama called "The Conflict of Conscience" had been founded on the somewhat analogous case of Francesco Spira, an Italian convert from Protestantism; and in 1587 a ballad was published on the same subject. When the play appeared, Spira had already been dead about three and thirty years, having perished by his own hand, and it is said under the influence of despair. Violent deaths were not uncommonly imputed to the devil, especially, as in the case of two great ladies of the Court of France in 1599, where the persons or features underwent rapid disfigurement. This idea was of course before the romancist of 1587.

When Marlowe engaged in the dramatization of the story, not only the English version of the German book of 1587 was before him, having been published in 1592, but a ballad on the same theme, licensed in 1589, and the anterior Spira performance, inasmuch that the theatregoer in London had been familiarized with the class of topic, and was predisposed to receive with attention a production of a far more lofty and noble cast.

There is no legitimate room for astonishment that the mysterious labours and tastes of Faustus should have awakened in the minds of his Saxon neighbours and German countrymen generally a

sentiment of dread and awe, when we consider how prevalent to this day in most parts of the world superstitious ignorance remains. The demonological portion of the narrative is of course a pure invention, partly based on contemporary gossip, and partly evolved from the fertile brain of the compiler of the German account in 1587. Half a century constituted a sufficient interval for the stealthy growth of myth round his name and his career. The very nature of his researches compelled secrecy and stratagem in such an age; and the inability to comprehend the true character of his occupations and objects tended to encourage fabulous reports.

We have only to remember that four and twenty years taken back from the received date of his decease (1538) brings us to 1514, when he was four and twenty years of age, a wholly improbable period of life for the conception of such a treaty as he is alleged to have contracted with Lucifer; and in our present state of information and opinion, even if we in England are somewhat behind Germany in philosophical analysis, it is almost superfluous to pursue the investigation farther, where the corner-stone of the indictment against Faustus is so transparently compounded of idle and foolish fables, concocted by the Church or under clerical auspices to throw discredit on a reader and thinker whose bias was adverse to ecclesiasticism, but who discerned the necessity of extreme caution in ventilating heterodox views, even in the relatively tolerant Fatherland.

This may explain the presence of the jocular episodes in the history, and even the miracle of the grapes. Faustus himself never probably claimed authority over superhuman powers; it was a method adopted by others of accounting for phenomena which they were unable to comprehend; and the attribute of a familiar was nothing more than a loan from the East, when, with an almost equal measure of inconsistency, the attendant genius executes commands involving an universal jurisdiction.

It is not very hard, after all, to divine and understand the relationship between Faustus and his contemporaries. If this celebrated man had had to reckon only with the illiterate majority immediately around him, his taste for inquiry and scientific research would have probably elicited from the neighbourhood a passing expression and sentiment of wonder and curiosity, and he would have been regarded by posterity as little more than Dr. Dee or Lilly the astrologer. But Faustus entertained and proclaimed

heretical theories on religious subjects; he placed himself in antagonism to the clergy. At a period when the Church was beginning to suffer from doctrinal ruptures and a questioning spirit, such a personage was bound to become a marked object of ecclesiastical jealousy and resentment, and in the description which has been delivered to us of the Knütlingen scholar, who feared neither God nor devil, and accomplished a variety of surprising feats by supernatural expedients, we easily recognise the familiar stratagem by which the clerical party has always retaliated on its secular adversaries. At all times, but more particularly in an age of prevailing illiteracy, the Church has been the maker of popular opinion. Faustus, as he is portrayed by the novelist and playwright, is not the Faustus of real life, but a masquerading caricature like Guy Fawkes or Marino Faliero; and we are indebted for such a serious distortion of the truth to the reports which were circulated about him by those whose interest lay in discrediting his peculiar opinions.

The treatment in the opera so-called is even yet more remote from the truth, and the scene opens with a representation of the hero as an aged person, whose return to youth during a specified term is supposed to be purchased at a fearful price—that of his soul, whereas the real Faustus demanded no such grace, as at the date of his alleged contract he was apparently not more than four and twenty.

The theatrical conception of Mephistopheles may be affirmed to be as false to Art as that of Faustus is to fact. He is a man in outward aspect only; but he is drawn as sharing our human passions and foibles. This is of a piece with the rest of the vulgar and silly melodramatic spectacle. From a contemporary satirist (Rowlands) we learn that, when Edward Alleyn played the chief part in Marlowe's piece, he wore *a surplice with a cross upon his breast*, may-be as a specious talisman against the approaches of Mephistopheles. It is merely a bibliographical anecdote that the Bodleian copy of the earliest known impression of the drama was in all probability once the property of Alleyn.

Shakespear in the "Tempest" has borrowed the name, not the character, as his Prospero is a magician of an altogether different type.

Faustus, in fact, was a philosopher, whose precise views will probably never be accurately known, as there is a certain amount

of contradiction in the account of him, on which we have almost exclusively to rely for our acquaintance with his intellectual training and range. It is tolerably manifest, however, that he was an unusually keen and attentive observer, under grave educational disadvantages, of the laws and processes of nature, and that he deduced therefrom a tissue of theory and speculation alike in conflict with the orthodox sentiment of his day.



## V

### ANNE BOLEYN

THE ordinary histories of England are almost, perhaps quite, unanimous in signalizing the advent of the second Tudor to the throne of England as an event of the most auspicious character, carrying with it the agreeable promise of happier times. They refer to the parsimony of his father, his own frank and chivalrous disposition, and the prospect of a more generous and popular reign. Henry was quite a youth when he succeeded his father in 1509, and married his brother Arthur's widow, Catharine of Arragon. He soon betrayed some points at least of his true character, notably his passion for ostentatious display, hand in hand with a touch of the paternal avarice. Our national annalists do not enter into certain details belonging to the opening years of this reign which demonstrate the not unusual co-existence of a taste for extravagant expenditure on objects of self-glorification and an unprincely and undignified thrift in ordinary matters of business. He had not been on the throne more than a twelve-month, and was scarcely twenty years of age, when we find him playing the part of a moneylender toward the countrymen of Shylock, who, however, declined His Grace's offer, the terms being unacceptable. The savings of his predecessor were burning his pocket, and he was not averse from lending a portion on adequate security; and it is remarkable that the young King stipulated that the latter, in the form of jewels, should be deposited before the cash was handed over. It was just at the juncture when the Venetians were meeting with all possible fortitude and sacrifices the acute crisis arising out of the League of Cambrai, and were patriotically lifting themselves for the moment above ordinary commercial calculations, that Henry certainly did all in his power to assist the Republic, so far as moral influence and diplomatic intervention went; but when it came to money the case was different. The intended victim of the famous European coalition

of 1509 experienced the same sort of practical goodwill from James IV. of Scotland and others. They were prepared to help, but the conditions had to be arranged. From no quarter, however, came a proposal so thoroughly bespeaking the pawnbroker as from the gay and gallant youth who had so lately succeeded to a provident rather than mean parent's brimming coffers. It transpires that His Grace was in a position to lend, if necessary, two million ducats, an amount equivalent to ten million sterling of our present currency at the least. He was permitted to keep his money—and waste it. But a circumstance quite as significant as this, and for our immediate purpose far more serviceable, is the curious glimpse which we almost seem to gain here—in 1510—of the constitutional propensity which became in later life a governing and tyrannical passion—a passion which proved itself more despotic than any despot. For, in a conversation with the Venetian envoy, Henry, when it was still uncertain whether the Republic would accept his noble offer, and it had been suggested that the envoy's wife should bring over the desired pledges, expressed a wish that the Signora should permanently reside in England. Perhaps his Excellency had communicated to the King a favourable impression of her personal attractions; and we know that the earliest development or germ of that unique uxorious prodigality took a different form, and limited itself to promiscuous amours of which our knowledge is naturally casual and imperfect. There is amply sufficient evidence to satisfy us that the Court of Henry included among its female members some who were far from being inexorable, and who had their counterparts in those of Mary and Elizabeth; and in the words commonly ascribed to Wolsey on his death-bed, after almost twenty years' experience of the autocrat, we recognise the key to the atrocious and disgraceful transactions with which his royal master's career is so deplorably replete. The fallen favourite is related to have said: "I do assure you that I have often kneeled before him, sometimes three hours together, to persuade him from his will *and appetite*, but could not prevail;" and this sentence precisely collates with the epigram that Henry spared no man in his anger and no woman in his lust. It is undoubtedly a most peculiar incidence of the later relations of Henry VIII. with the other sex that, whereas he might have restricted them without difficulty and peril to transient liaisons, he manifested and exercised a preference for more per-

manent and regular ties, and conducted to the altar the woman whom he did not scruple, if another presented herself and struck his fancy, to dismiss or to decapitate, according to the exigencies of the case. One instance, however, appears to stand out conspicuously from the rest, and it is that with which we are just now concerned—the story of Anne Boleyn. It is a passage of English history melodramatic enough, sombre enough, which may in some measure be treated as a sequel to the death of Wolsey in 1530, and the subsequent rise to distinction of the Boleyns and their connections, the Duke of Norfolk inclusive. Their temporary ascendancy was, of course, wholly due to an unpolitical and indirect cause.

Among the brilliant throng which composed or attended the Court in those days were the two daughters of Sir Thomas Boleyn, Mary and Anne. The former, of whom we have not so much to say, became successively the wife of Henry Carey and of Sir William Stafford. One of her sons by her first marriage was the celebrated Lord Hunsdon, cousin to Queen Elizabeth. The scanty and faint records of the early unmarried lives of these two ladies have to be considered for as much as they are worth, in order to aid us in estimating the conduct of Henry toward them, especially toward the younger one. As regards Mary Boleyn, who was left a young widow by the premature death of Carey in 1528, there is some reason to apprehend that her prenuptial career was by no means exemplary, and that before the King conceived his passion for her sister his relations with her were more or less equivocal. That he corresponded with her, and in terms as familiar as with her sister, extant letters shew. To detract from a reputation incapable of self-defence is a proceeding never to be lightly undertaken; but if there were no direct testimony to the effect, the view would be only in agreement with what we gather from documentary vouchers to have been the disposition or temperament of the member of the Boleyn family best known to history. Her cousin, Catharine Howard, resembled her in her volatility of character, if it were nothing more grave.

Fairly copious as may be the information transmitted to us touching that part of the life of Anne Boleyn from 1527 to her death, her girlhood is enveloped in obscurity, which it is difficult to explain in the presence of the survival of so many who must have been acquainted with her and her family while it was possible

to commit more minute particulars to paper. According to a familiar tradition, she alluded, at a later date, to the happy days which she had formerly passed at Erwarton, in Suffolk, a place with which she was connected by family ties through the Calthorpes and the Parkers; it was in Erwarton Church that she desired her heart to rest, and it was at Erwarton Hall that she very probably spent more or less of her girlhood. The knowledge of the sisters by the King clearly dated from a time when they were very young, and he must have been in the habit of seeing them about the date (1514) when Anne went to France in the train of the Princess Mary, preparatorily to the union of the latter with Louis XII. The Princess herself remained abroad some time after the death of Louis, and was privately remarried at Paris to Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk; but her attendant did not return permanently home till 1525, although she seems to have paid a visit to England in 1522. In 1525 she is described as being eighteen. She had resided on French ground sufficiently long to improve her already existing knowledge of the language, for there is a letter written by her from Hever Castle to her father when she was about eight, in French, suggestive of imperfect tuition. It is subscribed, "Vre treshumble et tresobiessante fille Anna de Boullan."

If any such intimacy as has been alleged took place between Mary Boleyn and her Sovereign, it is probably attributable to a period anterior to her first nuptials, when she was a mere girl.

In 1527, two years after the settlement of Anne in her own country, Henry had evidently begun to turn his thoughts in earnest toward her, and had preluded by thwarting her projected match with Lord Henry Percy; and it is approximately to the same point of time in this ill-dated tradition that we are asked to assign the first disclosure of the feelings of the King, and the scene where the lady casts herself on her knees and proclaims herself at once too good and not good enough, according to the tale. When the alliance with the house of Percy was set aside, Anne is supposed to have spent a certain time in retirement at her father's residence in Kent, but there are two letters, one from the King to her, the other from her to him, equally without note of the year. They are supposed to belong to 1527; they are at all events closely interconnected. In the former the King sends his portrait set in a bracelet as the best available substitute for himself, and in the other Anne refers to gifts received far beyond her deserts, and to

the royal warrant appointing her a maid of honour to the Queen. *These exchanged communications alike found her away from London*, presumably at Hever Castle; and she was there or elsewhere, yet not in or near the Metropolis or the Court, during the interval represented or covered by the series of letters addressed to her by Henry, of which we have several, and by those written to him, of which we apparently hold none. The royal epistles, which are uniformly undated, belong to the years while the divorce was being negotiated, and they gradually breathe and reflect increased impatience and ardour. We are to bear in mind that 1527 marked the point of time when Wolsey had fallen, and Cromwell, the Howards, and their kinsfolk the Boleyns, had come to the front.

The letters to Anne Boleyn just mentioned are easily accessible in print, although there is, so far, we believe, no complete and unexpurgated edition of them, that published at Paris by Crapelet being faulty and unfaithful. But our immediate object is a glance at the substance rather than a criticism of the text. The originals, both of those addressed to Anne and to her sister, are (with one or two exceptions) in the Vatican; but under what circumstances they were kept after perusal is unknown, as well as the channel through which they found their way to Rome. They were there in 1670, when Richard Lassels, travelling tutor to Lord Lumley and other English noblemen, describes them as "the letters of Henry VIII. of England to Anne Bolen, his mistriss then, in his own hand, written, some in English, some in French, but all amatory." Lassels adds that the writing corresponds with that in the presentation copy to Leo X. of the King's book against Luther—the *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum*, 1521.

No. IV. of the series, as printed, brings us to a stage when the writer deems himself at liberty to propose that Anne shall become his mistress, all other mistresses being discarded; and he solicits a reply to his request or demand, if not by letter, verbally, an assignation being arranged for the purpose. There is a tolerably good understanding, for the writer wishes himself in her arms, "that he might a little dispel her unreasonable thoughts." The next finds His Grace anxious to dedicate his body as well as his heart to his beloved, and is subscribed, "H. Rex."

The tenor of those which succeed grows progressively familiar, confidential, and fervid, and leaves no room to question that the

matrimonial scheme is only awaiting for its fulfilment the decision of the ecclesiastical authorities. The sixth contains the following passage: "*The Legate, which we most desire, arrived at Paris on Sunday or Monday last past, so that I trust by the next Monday to hear of his arrival at Calais; and then I trust within a while after to enjoy that which I have so long longed for, to God's pleasure and our both comforts. No more to you at this present, mine own darling, for lack of time, but that I would you were in mine arms, or I in yours, for I think it long since I kissed you.*" At the conclusion of No. VIII. there is matter in cipher, something too delicate to express in words, or the reverse; and its immediate successor (No. IX.) is yet more explicit and unreserved, the King making a *jeu de mots* on the double sense of *heart* (or *hart*) relative to a present of a hart forwarded to Anne with the letter. He, perhaps, knew to whom he addressed himself; but his lines did not receive a prompt acknowledgment, as we learn from No. X., when he sends a second offering of the same kind, which he had slain the evening before at a late hour, with the hope that, when she partook of it, she would think of the hunter. In No. XI. the prospect of happiness is drawing nearer, and enjoins her to request her father to accelerate the arrangements for the wedding; but Nos. XII. and XIII. reveal a seizure of Anne by some indisposition, the despatch of a physician to her residence, an attack of certain persons belonging to the household with the plague, and details as to the impracticability of appointing the lady's nominee to a conventual vacancy, owing to her candidate's unfavourable repute. Anne begins, one perceives, to have a finger in affairs of State, and her lover is flattered on his part by being consulted as to her continuance at Hever, availing himself of the occasion to remind her that it is not a question which is likely to trouble either of them long under contingent circumstances. No. XIV. is more cheerful and sanguine; the illness and plague disappear; the preparations go on; Anne is shortly to come to London. In No. XV. her visit to London is closer at hand; it has been kept a profound secret, yet it is a subject of common report and conversation, and His Grace can hardly tell how it has transpired. The XVI.th letter establishes that the recipient has come to town and has returned again, and it expresses the distress at the loss of her society, apprises her that he is engaged in composing his book ("*A Glass of the Truth,*" 1530), and that he has nearly got rid of his head-

## ANNE BOLEYN

ache—a lover's rather, perhaps, than an author's enthusiasm. The concluding paragraph is appended in the old orthography; it assuredly points a moral: "Wysching myselfe (specially an evenynge) in my swete hart harmys, whose prety dukkys I trust shortly to cusse," which passage may have a bearing on the scandalous gossip about the future Queen's physical malformation.

There is a final letter of the same texture, and two from Anne to Wolsey, seeking to ingratiate herself with my Lord Cardinal; but those which were indubitably sent to the King in response to his have not come down to us, or, at least, have not been recovered. There is no difficulty in penetrating the drift of all this succession of communications and tender sentiments. The disparity of age, as well as of rank, and the irresistible fascination of such prodigious advancement, lent an overwhelming preponderance to the suit of the royal libertine, so shocked, forsooth, by the naughtiness of the Prioress of Wilton, whom Anne had unwittingly recommended in one of the latest of her notes to His Grace; and slight doubt could be entertained as to the ultimate outcome of the business. Nevertheless, the problem involved in the divorce was not solved, in spite of all the diplomatic efforts of the King and his friends, till fully two years had passed, and then the solution was found at home. Henry cut the Gordian knot, and in 1533 he and Anne were privately married, leaving the position of Catharine of Arragon still subject to adjustment. As some indemnity for the provoking delay, the King had in the previous autumn created his mistress Marchioness of Pembroke in her own right, with special precedence over all other Marchionesses. Honours had of late flowed in fast enough—almost too fast to promise durability in such days. The Coronation of Anne took place at Westminster Abbey on June 2, 1533, and was carried out with the utmost magnificence. The King did not publicly manifest himself, curiously enough, but viewed the ceremony from a private box, to which he had invited the Ambassadors of France and Venice to accompany him. It was almost precisely what his father had done at the Coronation of Elizabeth of York in 1487. They are the only diplomatic personages specified in a contemporary narrative as having attended the procession from the Tower to Westminster, and they followed the two Archbishops. But all the great officers of State were present in response to a royal proclamation. The Lord Mayor of London performed his hereditary function as Butler.

to the Queen, and the Barons of the Cinque Ports held the canopy over her. In the uniface leaden impression of the Coronation medal the new Queen wears the dress which is mentioned in the contemporary account. Shakespear, in his "Henry VIII.," makes her wear her hair hanging down with a jewelled coif.

In 1527, when the King, so far as we are aware, made his first serious approach to his second wife, he was six-and-thirty, she twenty. Both the sisters may be taken to have possessed their full share of levity of character, bordering on giddiness. The elder, whose career was almost as checkered as that of Anne, was certainly at one juncture on a more than friendly footing with Henry, but retrieved any youthful indiscretions, and became on remarriage the devoted wife of an estimable but poor man, to whom she had united herself just before the Boleyns rose so unexpectedly to distinction, and to whom she continued to be as warmly attached as he was to her. We repeat that in 1527 Anne was about twenty. If a letter from her to the King, attributed to that year, but only known to us in a transcript, be authentic, its language leaves little to be desired in the way of surrender at the first summons. We have here, it appears, a sequel to a conversation between the two, which had been followed by a handsome gift and the warrant above mentioned, which would ostensibly have the effect of placing the new object of attachment within easy reach of her admirer, and of rendering her presence at the Court explainable without scandal. As a matter of fact, however, the maid of honour, advisedly or otherwise, kept aloof from London, or paid merely occasional and short visits to town, corresponding with Henry, as we partly perceive, by letter; and, if we are to form any conclusion from such imperfect epistolary remains as we hold, displaying no backwardness in meeting His Grace half-way, and we feel disposed to challenge the line taken by a dramatist of the later Stuart era, John Banks, in his play of "Virtue Betrayed," 1682.

Her part in the drama was, from the outset, we have to admit, by no means free either from difficulty or from peril. It was a courtship extending over six years or so (1527-1533). She was very young and inexperienced. The man whose humour it was to pay his addresses to her was a heartless and brutal sensualist of unlimited power, who, had she yielded to him too soon, would have deserted her, if he had not even taken her life; and she was surrounded by those who were hostile to her individually or to



## ANNE BOLEYN

her family on various grounds. Under such circumstances her conduct, probably under the confidential guidance of Thomas Cromwell to a larger extent than we actually hear, strikes us as remarkably judicious and discreet; and it is observable that she succeeded not only in keeping Henry so long at bay, so to speak, but espoused with warmth the cause of his reformed Church, and at the same time did her best to keep Wolsey on her side. Her conscientious or politic bias toward the principles of the Reformation survived her accession to the summit of her hopes and aims; and the copy of Tyndale's New Testament, 1534, formerly her property, with "Anna Regina Anglie" in red letters on the gilded edges of the leaves, is still preserved among the Cracherode books in the British Museum. There are fairly clear indications, indeed, that prior to her Coronation she befriended the quasi-Protestant cause to an almost indiscreet extent, and even drew on it the King's displeasure. A second volume which was almost undoubtedly in the Queen's possession, but which does not seem to have survived, or to have been recovered, was an English primer, published in 1535, with the royal arms crowned on the title, and in the upper angles "H. A." A copy on vellum was formerly in the Ashburnham Library. In the same year a translation from the Latin, entitled "The Defence of Peace," and, it is observable, published by the same William Marshall who issued the primer, has a prayer for the Queen, who must assuredly have received a copy from Marshall. In the British Museum is a small volume bound in gold, containing a portrait of Henry VIII. and a metrical version of some of the Psalms by John Croke, Clerk in Chancery. This is traditionally said to have been given by Anne Boleyn at the block to one of her maids of honour.

The historiette in which the Boleyn sisters—but, of course, more particularly she who became the mother of Queen Elizabeth—are the prominent figures may be said to offer to our consideration a prevailing feature of tragic sadness, and to exist as one of the numberless homilies for all time on the vanity and instability of human ambition. Those—and they are a majority—who lightly regard the story as a romance and a pageant were not the actors in the drama, nor with such books of reference as this country possesses are they placed in a position to realize the dangerous, prolonged, and anxious struggle which it cost the daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn to attain a fleeting enjoyment of

dignity and power in the shadow of a block. Did she not find herself supplanted in those inconstant affections by one who had been to her what she herself once was to Catharine of Arragon? Some, no doubt, saw here a just retribution, as others busied themselves with circulating calumnies about her character and her person, of which the most outrageous was the allegation, countenanced by Dr. Baily in his "Life of Bishop Fisher," that Henry himself was her father.

The whole span of that impressive career was no more than seven-and-twenty years. Mr. Green, in his "History of the English People," suggests that Queen Elizabeth inherited from her mother that occasional levity of deportment which formed such a contrast to her attitude and tone in serious affairs. But Henry VIII. equally exhibited a strange mixture of callous resolution and even exuberant bonhomie.

In the third window of the Great Hall at Hampton Court occur the arms, badges, and initials of the unhappy Queen, accompanied by a legend of her descent from Edward I. and his second wife, Margaret of France. In the chimneypiece of the old presence-chamber at St. James's Palace her initial, with that of the King (H. A.), are preserved; and there are gold and silver pieces struck during the brief reign with H. and A. as part of the type. In the picture at Hampton Court, representing Henry VIII. and his family, the princess Elizabeth wears a jewel, in which appears the initial letter of her mother's Christian name.

The particulars of the trial, which was conducted with all the usual formalities in public, under the Presidency of the Duke of Norfolk, as High Steward of England, are now well known. It is remarkable that Henry Percy, Earl of Northumberland, the Queen's former lover, was present, but left the Hall before sentence was pronounced. Sir Thomas Boleyn witnessed the trials of the other prisoners, but withdrew before those of the Queen and her brother commenced. The Duke of Norfolk, when he delivered judgment on the Queen, burst into tears. The Queen entertained to the last a hope of pardon, and said one day at dinner that she should go to Antwerp. This was on May 16, three days before she suffered. Archbishop Cranmer interceded in vain on her behalf. In a letter addressed to Secretary Cromwell by a Frenchman, it is alleged that on the day before the execution the tapers round the tomb of Catharine of Arragon kindled of their own accord and,

that after matins, at *Deo Gratias*, the said tapers expired in the same way.

It has been thought that the Queen would have desired to rest at Erwarton, in Suffolk, or at Salle, in Norfolk, but she was buried in the chancel before the altar of the Chapel of St. Peter Ad Vincula in the Tower, by the side of her brother, Lord Rochford. In 1876 the remains were discovered, and are described as those of "a female of between twenty-five and thirty years of age, of a delicate frame of body, and who had been of slender and proper proportions." There was still a vestige of her "little neck." The skull was well formed, with an intellectual forehead, an oval face, and large eyes. The feet and hands were delicate and well shaped, the former narrow, and the fingers of the hands tapering. On one of the fingers was a second rudimentary nail.

The person employed to carry out the sentence was brought over from Calais, and severed the head from the body with a single stroke of his sword. It has been said that the eyes and lips moved after the decapitation. One of her French attendants took up the head, and others raised the body, covering it with a sheet, and laid the whole remains in an arrow-chest, which they bore into the chapel.

The King wore white mourning for his late Consort, who had taken yellow for her colour at the death of Catharine of Arragon. In the attribution to Anne of the song beginning, "Death, rock me asleep," there seems to be no probability. A Portuguese gentleman who was present at the execution states that it was the first instance in which a sword in lieu of an axe was employed in England; he terms this the manner and custom of Paris, and, in fact, it had been in vogue there and elsewhere on the Continent during centuries. Had Queen Elizabeth left male issue, it is more than possible that the direct descendant of her mother would at present be seated on the British throne.

It seems strange that of a personage so eminently conspicuous and romantically interesting there should be so few likenesses entitled to credit. The Print Room at the British Museum possesses nothing worthy of mention, and the Holbein drawing at Hampton Court is certainly not very prepossessing. On the whole, perhaps, the portrait accompanying the letters from Henry VIII. in Crapelet's volume appears to be the most pleasing.

It has not been the simplest of tasks to gather together the

particulars which constitute the present essay, and which are in the main outside the category of the State Papers deposited in our own public institutions. It is scarcely ever the case that a modern writer finds it possible to make the past revive, and enable his own age to realize the sequence of incidents as they unfolded themselves, much less to reanimate the *dramatis personæ* and the scenes in which they moved: the ever-changing impulses and looks, the audible notes of emotion, the conflict of motives, the private gossip, the actual splendour of festivities and ceremonies, the echo of the voices of the crowd, the clatter of the horses' hoofs, the dead silence at the descent of the executioner's sword. Beyond the series of letters to the Queen from Henry, which do not, in all probability, represent all that were sent, the epistolary documents elucidating Anne Boleyn's public career appear to be limited to those published by Ellis and Mrs. Green, and to two or three among the Cottonian MSS. in the British Museum; and even of these some belong to what may be termed her prehistoric days. Such few as they are, they spread themselves over the period between early girlhood and accession to the throne; but one—that of a lay brother of the Observants at Greenwich—stands by itself in being addressed, not by Anne, but to her, and during the very brief interval when she enjoyed the title of Marchioness of Pembroke.

## VI

### BUNYAN

To the class of writing which is termed allegory recourse was had at a very early period. Many of the mediæval romances partake of the character. "The History of Reynard the Fox," for instance, is principally known at the present day as a chap-book or a nursery tale; but in its original design it was nothing more nor less than a satirical allegory or an allegorical satire. This system of teaching or expounding by apologue, of clothing the meaning in an obscure form, was by no means uncommon among our early writers, even down to the time of Charles I. It may have owed its rise to the restraints which were placed on the liberty of the tongue and of the pen prior to the Reformation. Thus we have political allegory and spiritual allegory: and it is under the second denomination that we must place a book of enduring fame, a world's book, as it might be called—"The Pilgrim's Progress" of John Bunyan.

Bunyan unquestionably possessed the imaginative faculty in a very high degree. He was a man also of strong, earnest feeling, and of a contrite heart. His temperament was singularly excitable and more than wholesomely sensitive. From having been in earlier life a somewhat loose and irregular member of society, he became the most rigid of disciplinarians and the most bitter and severe of self-accusers. He forsook the bottle, and the oath was heard no more on his lips; he read his Bible, and began to qualify himself for a preacher of the Word. In the meantime, his spirit was oppressed by the gloomiest forebodings. He looked on himself as the "chief of sinners,"—as one whose transgressions were of too black a dye to permit him to indulge the most distant hope of the Water of Life. These and similar expressions should not, of course, be interpreted too literally. We must not accept the testimony of Bunyan against himself without some reserve. We must make allowance for the circumstances under which he wrote,

the age in which he lived, and the sect that he was of. Bunyan had in his youth mixed with blackguards, and he had been little better perhaps than his companions. But, after awhile, his eyes had been opened, and he began to leave the ways of darkness. Still, however, he did not cease to doubt utterly of his own perfectibility; and it is certain that his sense of his moral infirmity remained through life morbidly acute. He even gravely doubted whether God would ever pardon him for playing at tip-cat.

Few are found bold enough to dispute that "The Pilgrim's Progress" is a work of the highest order of excellence in its kind. Yet I almost doubt if the exact nature of that excellence be so fully or generally understood. The fact is, that so far from being the first, or even among the first, who attempted that class of composition, the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress" was the *last* contributor of any note to allegorical literature. The name of Bunyan closes and crowns a somewhat long list of writers, both in our own and other languages, whose common aim it has been to picture life as a pilgrimage, and to describe the manifold perils which beset the traveller on the "Great Highway." In "The Pilgrim's Progress," then, we must not look for the embodiment of a new conception, nor even a familiar one clothed in a new form; but in that remarkable work we may recognize a novel realization of an idea which had germinated in the literary mind of Europe during the Middle Ages. Whatever differences of opinion may exist as to the *literary* value of the book and of the other works from the same pen, no one can question its and their potential and lasting *human* significance, and the fame and rank of Bunyan may be said greatly to rely on his religious nonconformity and his morbid enthusiasm of temperament. No churchman, no thoroughly sane person, could have written such a volume, could have left posterity such an inheritance.

The literary labours of Bunyan are among the richest and least perishable trophies of religious dissent; but he was, after all, only one of many, such as Jeremy Taylor, Baxter, Walton, Evelyn, in their several ways, whose lot it was to cross over from a puritanical age to an age of dissolute gaiety, and to produce books superficially out of concord with the times, yet, in truth, natural products of them. He committed to the press those writings, by which he is best known, in years when his country

## BUNYAN

was torn from end to end by political intrigue and religious schism, when England was at as low an ebb as it had been since the Wars of the Roses, in regard to power and prestige, or had ever been in regard to morality. The Church was divided against itself; the Protestant Establishment was infected with Romanism; and Episcopacy was face to face with two hostile influences: the Popish leaning of the Court and the steady ascendancy and multiplication of the Nonconformists.

As Dunlop remarks, the existence of works of a kindred character antecedent in point of time to "The Pilgrim's Progress" "can detract little from the praise of originality." The discovery of such prototypes, even if it were at all probable that the English writer had seen them, can only have the one effect of shewing the vast superiority of Bunyan to those who went before him. But we know how scanty the early reading of the great allegorist had been, and one is apt to suspect that for the production of the masterpiece which he has left behind him Bunyan was all but exclusively indebted to his own weird imagination and deep knowledge of his own human heart.

If, however, we grant that Bunyan founded his work more or less on earlier models, the question arises, from what quarter he chiefly drew his materials. Now there are no fewer than six works from which he may, with greater or less probability, be supposed to have been a borrower. These are:—"The Pilgrimage of Man" and "The Pilgrimage of the Soul," by Guillaume de Guileville, of the former of which there are translations both by Lydgate and Skelton; "The Pilgrimage of Perfection," by W. Bonde; "Le Voyage du Chevalier Errant," by Jean Cartigny, a Carmelite, 1572, translated by W. Goodyear; "The Table of Cebes the Theban," translated by John Healey, 1616; "The Isle of Man," an allegory, by Richard Bernard, 1627. In the prologue to his work Bonde says that the book "sheweth how the life of every Christian is as a pilgrimage, which we do and promise in our baptism, taking on us the journey to the *Heavenly Jerusalem*."

The "*Pèlerinage de l'Homme*" is supposed to have been written when our Chaucer was a child. It opens by informing the reader that in the year 1330, being then a monk in the monastery of Chalis, he had a dream, in which he saw afar off, as if reflected in a mirror, the celestial city of Jerusalem. He dwells on the wondrous beauty

of its construction, on the elegance of its mansions and so forth, and particularly points out the *little wicket-gate*. After introducing his Pilgrim, De Guileville proceeds thus :—

“ Ainsi comment querant aloye  
Et en pleurant me guementoye  
Ou ce bourdon peusse trouuer  
Et celle escarpe pour porter  
Une dame de grant beaulte  
Et de tresgrant nobilite  
Je recontray droit en ma voye.”

This “dame de grant beaulte,” Gracedieu by name, is, of course, the Evangelist of “The Pilgrim’s Progress.” “I looked then,” says Bunyan, “and saw a man named Evangelist coming to him, who asked, ‘Wherefore dost thou cry?’ ‘Because I fear,’ replies Christian, ‘that this burden that is upon my back will sink me lower than the grave, and I shall fall into Tophet.’” So in De Guileville :—

“ Ainsi comme ung cinge acroche  
A ung bloqueau et atache  
Lequel en hault ne peut monter  
Que tost ne faille reualer  
Ainsi mest ung bloquel pesant  
Le corps et ung retenail grant  
Il me rabat quant vueil voler  
Et retire quant vueil monter.”

The next point of resemblance is where Gracedieu presents her Pilgrim with the *scrip* or *scarf* :—

“ Voy cy lescharpe et le bourdon  
Que promis tay ie ten foiz don  
Mestier tauront en ce voyage  
Garde les si feras que saige  
Lescharpe si est foy nommee  
Sans laquelle nulle iournee  
Tu ne feras ia que rien vaille.”

This allocution of Gracedieu corresponds with the exhortation of Evangelist to Christian and Faithful before they reach the town of Vanity. Just as in Bunyan we find Faithful and Hopeful made the companions of Christian, so, in the prototype, Gracedieu presents her Pilgrim with the scrip of *Faith* and with the staff, whose



name is Hope. In De Guileville, the pilgrim is recommended to arm himself with the same kind of weapons as are seen by Christian in the House Beautiful. There is, moreover, a similarity between the *Envoy*s of Bunyan and De Guileville :—

## BUNYAN.

*Go now, my little Book, to every place  
Where my first Pilgrim has but shewn  
his face.*

## DE GUILLEVILLE.

*Donques songe tu ten gras  
Par tout les lieux ou este as  
A tous tes prounains ie tenuoie  
Pource que bien y scez la voye  
De par moy va les tous tailler.*

Again, both writers complain of piracy :—

## BUNYAN.

'Tis true, some have of LATE, to  
counterfeit  
*My Pilgrim, to their own, my Title set.*

## DE GUILLEVILLE.

*Car sans mon seeu et volunte  
Tout mon escript me fut oste  
Par tout divulge.*

It may be observed that both the works to which we are referring are presented to us under the similitude of a dream. In both cases the scene of this dream is laid in a wood. Bunyan had his reason for adopting the allegorical form of writing. He says, in his peculiar doggerel—

"I also know a dark similitude  
Will on the fancy more itself intrude,  
And will stick faster in the heart and head,  
Than things from similes not borrowed."

Bunyan, as well as his prototype, exhibited in his composition the result of a mixed study of Sacred Writ and of the mediæval romances. The parallel hardly extends much farther. It may be true that the characters of "The Pilgrimage of Man" and the heroes of "The Pilgrim's Progress" have something in common—the kind of likeness which might almost naturally be expected in two productions so identical in subject and design; but it is impossible, I should think, not to see at a glance the superiority of the Bedford preacher to the monk of Chalis in the vividness of his portraiture and the accuracy of his delineations. "It is the charm of common sense and reality," writes Dr. Cheever, "that constitutes in a great measure the charm of Bunyan's book." In the earlier work, which is, on the contrary, cold, abstract, and

colourless, much of the charm is lost. Bunyan's understanding was of ampler grasp and scope than that of his prototype; he was a man of larger sympathy and of greater enthusiasm. He had mixed more with the world than De Guileville, and his pages display accordingly a nicer perception of character and a wider knowledge of human nature.

As regards De Guileville's other work, his "Pilgrimage of the Soul," it pictures the vicissitudes of the soul of man subsequently to its enfranchisement from its human incarnation, in the same manner that its predecessor represented, under the same allegorical form, the progress of the spiritual essence and the temptations and dangers to which it is exposed during its presence in the flesh. The First Pilgrimage of our author exhibited man in his state of probation and trial, exposed to all the snares and toils of the world. In such a composition it was perhaps natural to expect those parallelisms and features of identity which actually exist between it and "The Pilgrim's Progress." But in the Second Pilgrimage, the narrative opens at that point when the divorce of the body from the soul and the transmigration of the latter are just taking place. We here see the better part shake off the bondage of the flesh; we behold it conducted to the judgment-seat; we hear the award of the judge, St. Michael the Archangel, and we obtain more than a glimpse of the atonement in purgatory, and of the final attainment of blessedness, with the ascent of the soul to heaven under the escort of the guardian angel. In treating that branch of his subject which embraces the intermediate state, De Guileville has been left without a rival, if not without a disciple. The purgatorial expiation formed a theme on which Bunyan was advisedly silent. In the words of a modern editor, "Bunyan wisely, perhaps, stopped short at the death of his Pilgrims; telling, indeed, how they were led by the Shining Ones, who received them beyond the river, to the gate of heaven, but passing over in silence the intermediate state. De Guileville, however, living at an earlier period and in the Romish communion, is restrained by no such scruples. He does not hesitate to answer that question, which must have occurred to many, *What is the Soul doing between the moment of its departure from the Body and the Final Judgment?* Or again, *Is there any previous Judgment?*" In a word, the paths of the Puritan and Romish writers become from the opening of the Second Pilgrimage widely divergent.

In the fifth and concluding book, which relates "how the soul, after purgatory, is led by its guardian angel to heaven," there is no inconsiderable degree of merit and beauty. The conception and treatment of the subject, however, are on the whole rather gross and materialistic. In the judgment scene, in the first book, all the forms of legal procedure, such as they existed perhaps in the French law courts of the fourteenth century, are closely observed.

## VII

### DR. JOHNSON

“Dr. Johnson’s fame now rests principally upon Boswell. It is impossible not to be amused with such a book. But his *bow-wow* manner must have had a good deal to do with the effect produced.”—COLERIDGE.

AN eminent philologist and lexicographer of our day obliged the world with a new and improved edition of Dr. Samuel Johnson’s “Dictionary of the English Language,” and was censured by one of his reviewers for the arrogant terms in which he had thought proper to couch his introductory remarks. It was the critic, however, who had found a mare’s nest, not the editor who was to blame; for the preface was neither more nor less than the Doctor’s own prolegomena affixed to the original—two volumes folio—impression of the book, and, of course, Johnsonian to the backbone.

The mistake was droll and vexatious enough, but, for my own part, I could not help feeling that the incident occurred rather opportunely to help me out with something I had on my mind about Dr. Johnson—a matter or two of fact or guess which, if I can make anything of it, may seem to have a kind of newness to recommend it.

When, some time ago, I had occasion to inquire in the vicinity of Bolt Court, Fleet Street, in the city of London, a locality not specially dedicated or dear to the nine maiden-sisters, whether anything was known of a certain poet who had lived and died thereabout, some of the oldest inhabitants pointed to a house and a tree which, they said, were his house and his tree, in which he had lived, beneath which he had stood.

My search had struck me at first as Quixotic; for my poet, of whom I desired some substantial vestige, some human trace, had died two hundred years ago. Then, the sooth to say, I had a sneaking trust in the transmission of knowledge through few links, in the faculty of tradition to give a seeming life to the impalpable and distant; and here, surely enough, was something

bearing likeness to a tangible footprint of the man, at whom I wanted to get nearer somehow than was to be done in extant books.

But fortune turned out unkind after all; for the house and the tree had not been his, but another's. Enshrined in the memory of the Bolt-Courters was—not the cavalier-poet Richard Lovelace, for whose life I was at the time I write of on the keen look-out for all waifs and strays, the salvage of time,—but another son of Apollo, a different worshipper at Helicon, a bard of Troia-Nova as well—to wit, SAMUEL JOHNSON, Doctor of Laws.

How many will ask, And was this *our* Dr. Johnson? Did he not write the Dictionary? And was he, indeed, a poet too?

Lord Chesterfield once said of Swift's works, "Whoever in the three kingdoms has any books at all, has Swift," and one of Dr. Johnson's editors, Alexander Chalmers, thought that for "Swift" one might read "Johnson" just as properly. Three collected editions of Johnson had been exhausted in twenty years, and a fourth was on the eve of completion, and was "loudly called for," says Mr. Chalmers; so it looks as if there might have been something in it—as if the wind was really in that quarter at the time. But then the time was seventy or eighty years ago, and popular memory is fugacious. How many authors have lived in half a century—and died, works and all? Lexicographers, poets, essayists, letter-writers, wits, men who were the idols of the society in which they moved, who were thought likely to eclipse all who had gone before them!

It is not a great lexicographical performance alone which can make a man live—live, that is to say, as a person, not a mere abstraction or *nominis umbra*; witness Richardson, who is already lost sight of, and who died, as it were, yesterday! Nor a poem, which made its mark, and gave its author a kind of renown: look at Bloomfield! Does the public read the "Farmer's Boy"? Is it not as dead, in a popular sense, as last year's leaves, and was not there a time when that was "loudly called for," as well as the twelve full-sized octavos of Johnson?

But then in Johnson's case there was this important difference, that he was a type standing by himself, with powerful individual characteristics, and a man at his elbow half his life—the better half—who was brought into the world ostensibly for no other purpose than to become his biographer. If we had had more Boswells, there is a distant possibility that we might have had

more Johnsons. As the matter stands, we have only one; and that one was a person, who providentially always kept within view his unique function as a remembrancer or an amanuensis. He did just what Johnson could not have done for himself, and what a better man than Boswell could not have done for him. Nor is the obligation a one-sided one. For, while had it not been for Johnson we should never have heard of Boswell, on the other hand, had it not been for his biographer how much less we must have known of Johnson! and, again, the influence for good exerted by Boswell was not inconsiderable, if we look at the enlargement of experience and dissipation of prejudice due to that Tour to the Hebrides, undertaken after a good deal of importunity under the biographer's influential auspices. It has always struck me as a convincing proof of Johnson's intrinsic eminence, that George III., then quite young, should have sought that interview with a man who was neither a politician nor a courtier, but whose portrait had been painted by Reynolds, and whose personality was being already familiarized by Boswell; and it is an eminence which has proved not temporary, which has stamped itself like an impression from a die on the national mind.

It appears to us very strange that so many people should have turned to Dr. Johnson's works with a view to forming from them a just idea of Dr. Johnson. No wonder that they have come away disappointed, and not a little surprised, that he should have been made and thought so much of by the most distinguished characters of the age to which he belonged.

An ordinary author, if he be immortalised at all, is immortalised by his works. The converse, as we take it, is true of Johnson; it is his works which have been made immortal by him. They live because he lives. *His* fame is independent of them; he would be just what he is if they had not been written. No intelligent critic would send a man whom he desired to form a favourable estimate of Johnson to "Rasselas" or the "Adventurer," or even the "Lives of the Poets," nowadays. But he would put into his hands the Life and Letters, where he might judge of him all in all, and balancing this against that, come perhaps to the conclusion that nobody has yet done him full justice, or made him quite distinctly *understandable*. Boswell wrote down, not what he thought, but what he heard and what he saw.

A test, which is by no means always or even usually trustworthy,

is perhaps so in the present case, and the reason may be that, intellectually and morally speaking, less has been lost of Johnson than of any man who ever lived. All save his physical frame and his speaking accents are yet with us. Boswell has laid his qualities, good, bad, and indifferent, before us, like a second Montaigne, and we see that in the face of stupendous disadvantages more than sufficient to have crushed an ordinary person, Johnson succeeded in making his way to the front, and in winning homage and regard from men and women of the most various positions and opinions. The friends of his school-days and his youth were among those of his last years. He owed his pension to his Dictionary, and he owed his independence to his pension. There was the secret. He spoke as he thought, and he spoke without fear and without bitterness. It is as ridiculous to deny his greatness as it is to assert that he is among our great authors. We turn again and again to the "Life and Letters" from youth to old age, not as we do to the Diary of Pepys, for the gossip about others, but to renew our personal acquaintance with one of the most original minds which has ever appeared in this or any other country, and one of the earliest to revolt against the servility paid to the great.

Macaulay has joined pretty cordially in the universal horse-laugh at Boswell's expense; but we may be sure that Boswell will outlive his more illustrious successor. The truth is, that Macaulay's "Memoir of Dr. Johnson" is not exactly what it ought to have been, but is almost exactly what we might have expected to get from such a source. It is, in many essential features, grossly unfair, superficial, and melodramatic; as to its omissions, they are of inferior consequence; and, indeed, if they had been more numerous in some places, it would have been a *gain*, rather than a loss, we incline to consider. The writer has used a caricaturist's license, and by dint of broad lines and plenty of colour has left for our benefit a very agreeable cartoon, nearly half as good as Hogarth's, but more, no doubt, now we think of it, in the manner of John Doyle.

With all his prodigious reading, remarkable sagacity, and considerable faculty of criticism, Macaulay never shook himself loose from the mischievous habit of jumping at conclusions, and arguing from tangents. He was, above all, the epigrammatist, even where he posed as a historian or a reviewer. He is more

prejudiced than Johnson, whose prejudices he derides; he is more unjust than Johnson, whose injustice he exposes. In his "Life of Goldsmith" he unconsciously portrays himself, where he speaks of the author of the "Vicar of Wakefield" as inaccurate, but entertaining. Macaulay was a brilliant prose epigrammatist, ever ready to sacrifice truth to theatrical or rhetorical effect.

If any one were to enter upon a life of Johnson, as it should and very well might be written, it would be hardly time misspent to ascertain fully beforehand, as a work of preparation, the state of contemporary opinion on many points of conduct and etiquette (so to speak), where, we cannot be quite sure how truly, offensive singularity has been imputed to Johnson. Perhaps, besides, there may have been a certain aptness to forget that, since Johnson died, three generations have passed away, and a fourth is fast disappearing; for even our grandfathers were too young to have conversed with the friend of Reynolds and Burke, with the man whose society was more cultivated, whose judgment was more prized, and whose memory was more respected, than most men of his own or any other time; and who represents the prototype of manly independence in English literature.

To take what may be treated as a very unimportant illustration, yet which has been repeatedly singled out as if it had been something more, how many have held up Johnson as an oddity, because he began his sentences, oraclewise, with "Sir, this," or "Sir, the other," without being aware that he merely followed here a prevailing custom, which has not even yet been completely discontinued.

In the extremely polished and refined age with which we have the honour to be connected, the manners even of our immediate ancestors would, we dare say, in some few particulars appear scarcely genteel enough to suit the general taste. We fancy, if we were to be called upon, we could pick out a few living men's grandfathers who slouched in their gait, and slobbered over their meals; who wore rusty black, though on good terms with their tailors, and forgot to tie their shoe-strings; yet who were people of moderate mark and likelihood, and *breathe on*, handed down to their children and to us by the pencil of Lawrence or the chisel of Nollekens. For to eat fast and dress shabbily, and move clumsily, are of all time, and must not be appropriated as Johnsonian traits by writers of Macaulay's school.

There is one very curious passage, in a letter of May 10, 1775.



where Boswell seems to apprehend that the Doctor entertained a jealousy of literary rivalry, for he observes to Temple, "Between ourselves, he [Johnson] is not apt to encourage one to share reputation with himself!" This was allusive to the publication of a supplement to the "Tour in the Hebrides."

It may read like a paradoxical assertion to say that Johnson modelled his *poetical* style on Pope's and Dryden's severer compositions. He imitated those great masters of the more modern English school of versification—*longissimo intervallo*. He succeeded in copying their manner, and shared their vigour of expression. The majestic even flow of Pope's numbers and Dryden's "mighty line" were precisely what we might expect that Johnson would admire and endeavour to emulate. He caricatured both.

The attempt was not very happily attended, as we know, nor was it very likely that a man of Johnson's intellectual mettle should make a good figure in poetry. In Pope it was spontaneous inspiration. Johnson's maxim seems to have been that if a man *resolved* to do a thing, he *could* do it, and he acted upon this doctrine both in prose and verse. The force which is admired in "The Essay on Man," and in "Absalom and Achitophel," is as distinct from that which is so conspicuous an element in the "Vanity of Human Wishes," as the force of a river's tide is distinct from that of a blacksmith's hammer.

Johnson's verse is as stilted, laboured, and artificial, as Gibbon's prose. The latter continues to be reprinted, because, we suppose, it appeals to two classes of buyers, people who do not read at all, and people who think Shakespear would have succeeded better if he had been an University man. We do not know, after all, but that, if Johnson had taken in hand a translation of the "Decline and Fall" into hexameter couplets, he would have made a tolerable thing of it. He must have appreciated the stately periods and imposing verbosity of the philosopher of Lausanne, and he would have done ample justice to the "original copy."

The sceptical passages, we doubt not, he would have silently suppressed; for he and Gibbon were on different sides of the question there. Johnson, though not a regular church-goer, was accustomed to resort to private prayer and meditation with an ardour worthy of the ancient beadsmen, upon occasions the most various and opposite. He prayed when he lost his wife. He prayed when he was of two minds, whether he ought to under-

take the "Rambler," and whether the "Rambler" was a good title. He prayed, and in Latin, when he had farewell to Thrale Place. He prayed, when he was dubious, if he should at last undertake the edition of Shakespear, for which he had spent the subscriptions years ago. We find Hearne the antiquary, when he was debating whether he should go as a missionary to Maryland, and when he fell in with three old MSS., doing the same thing. How, in all this deplorable fanaticism we are reminded of the late Mr. Gladstone, who, before he made a speech in Parliament, invoked Divine sympathy and sanction!

Here, if we mistake not, we come upon a singular and touching feature in Johnson's character. He seems to have inherited that religious fervour, which in him was so conspicuous, from his mother, who was of the Warwickshire Fords, and a member of that old quietist sect, almost extinct. It is hardly perhaps surprising that he should have proclaimed Law's "Serious Call" to be the finest piece of hortatory theology in any language.

Johnson's idiosyncrasy (so to describe it) was a remnant of the antique English superstition, which we find, looking back, to have prevailed universally heretofore among those who had reliance on private intercession as a means of grace and light. We can conceive that Johnson, if he had lived when augury by tokens was in vogue, would have been a steadfast believer in the flight of crows; and that, if his lot had been cast in an astrological age, he would have consulted his horoscope before going a journey, or embarking in an enterprise. It was for men of Johnson's religious bent, without his large intellect, that works like the "Spiritual Almanack" were compiled, "wherein every man and woman," as the title-page reads, "may see what they ought daily to do." Johnson was probably the last person of letters who thus united with a noble understanding a childlike credulity, redolent of the old time; he was of those, who credited the Cock Lane Ghost hoax, and actually visited the spot in the expectation of communicating with the spirit. Yet, withal, we repeatedly meet in Boswell's *Hebridean Journal* with instances of his great friend's superiority to common reports, and even derision of some popular superstitions; and we are also apt to be struck by the modernness of Johnson's mind in some respects.

We feel that if one tenth part of the very laudable industry which has been bestowed on the magnificent writings of Shakespear

had been laid out in elucidating for us the character of Johnson, a man of very inferior genius, but for all that equally *eminent* in a way, we should not see him as we do, in a sort of chiaroscuro light. Malone annotated Boswell's Life, but not as he annotated Shakespear's Dramas.

Nor was it to be expected that he should. Johnson was too modern *then*. As much as he cared to learn about him, Malone could get from personal friends of both—and *more*, perchance. The crust of antiquity had not collected upon him yet. The sound of his voice and his footstep had hardly died away. Malone and his contemporaries would as soon have dreamed of collecting materials illustrative of Johnson and his times, as Milton might have thought of gathering "Cromwelliana," or Edward Philips of writing documentary memoirs of the author of "Paradise Lost." When we consider how much time Johnson consumed in social intercourse, and how much in reading books—even such as we scarcely regard as books—it astonishes us that he accomplished so much in a literary direction.

A man is not history till he has been dead reasonable years, and is not thought proper game for biography, unless a certain time has counted itself out over his tombstone. What, if it had not been so, and Stow had left behind him a life of Spenser, or Milton had put upon record all that he could have learned about Shakespear and about Bacon?

So it has been, *to a certain extent*, with him of whom we are speaking, in spite of Boswell, and Malone upon Boswell, and Croker on Malone. For, copious and minute as Boswell and his followers or helpers are, there are points in Johnson's early career about which we are not, and probably never shall be, altogether clear. Over a few the utmost obscurity hangs. We remember seeing it noted that at one of Charles Lamb's Wednesday evenings the question was raised as to what Dr. Johnson was doing in the year 1745, and no satisfactory reply was forthcoming; but it was vaguely surmised that he might have been in the Highlands with the Young Pretender. Of course, that notion is incompatible with probability, but Boswell says that all that he could trace to his pen under 1745 was the "Observations on Shakespear's *Macbeth*." The younger Dodsley, however, reports a conversation between Johnson and his father in that year in Pall Mall, and the very circumstances of the "Tour to the Hebrides" ought to have been sufficient to disprove an anterior visit in that direction.

Something more might have come of the discussion, if Lamb had not discouraged it by the remark that he thought we knew as much as was worth knowing on the subject, and that he had no curiosity about Johnson. Perhaps he shared Coleridge's opinion, which was more than indifference to the author of "Rasselas"—positive dislike.

Many of Lamb's peculiar notions we can understand, and with some of them we can sympathise; but we must confess that if hereafter accident should give to us any papers throwing new light on some portions of the early life of Samuel Johnson, especially his participation (if any) in the fortunes of Charles Edward, the value we should set upon such a discovery would be a high one.

Hazlitt once scandalised his audience by repeating the story about Johnson and the unhappy castaway whom he carried home on his shoulders to save her from perishing of hunger and cold. There was a general murmur of surprise and disapprobation in the room at this *contretemps*, as it was thought to be; but the lecturer dexterously added, "And this realises our notion of the good Samaritan!" upon which his hearers turned round and applauded what, a moment before, they had been ready to condemn and decry as an unconventional illustration of character.

There was no *Mimminy-pimininess* about Johnson. Unlike the late Mr. Frederic Locker Lampson, he was masculine, robust, broad. He was a moralist of the most active and thorough-going stamp. If he did not always think what he felt, he always said what he thought. He was not a church-goer, as we have mentioned, either from bringing up or indolence; but his piety was perhaps none the less sincere. There are no finer essays on practical religion than the literary history of "Rasselas" and that most pathetic episode in Lichfield market-place, which makes us think of the manners of ancient Hellas, and of the obsequious deference of the great Achilles to his father Peleus.

The "Lives of the Poets" are rather biographical theses than biographies. They are scanty and imperfect, yet so thoroughly idiosyncratic, that it is better to leave them as they were written, than to put them into the hands of an editor, who would emasculate them.

In a literary sense Johnson is best remembered to-day by his Dictionary, the forerunner of Richardson. You are cordially advised by the book-sellers to secure the first impression, because it contains errors not in any other! Such is by no means the case, however; it has not even this poor virtue.

## VIII

### COLERIDGE

REVIEWING the sources to which we have to go for the life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, we find that we have no cause, for the most part, to complain of them being scanty or being few. Some are rich in records of his earliest days; others, in those of his later years, when his powers were matured, and his opinions were most valuable to us. Scarcely any, however, of those who have written upon him, or about him, are qualified to be our companions from the beginning to the end, to assist us to so much as glimpses of that great muser through the whole of his earthly sojourn.

To us Coleridge is essentially the thinker, the philosopher, the tutor of many minds, one of the noblest and most capacious intellects of his own or any other time. Let us think of him merely as the author of the "Biographia Literaria," the "Aids to Reflexion," and other fine bequests to all posterity, as the expositor of some of the subtlest principles of philosophy, as one who dallied with the seven sciences as an eagle with the wind, and had treasured up in the "book and volume" of his brain more learning and knowledge than all the Sages of Greece. A sort of new Myrtilus, who is commemorated by Athenæus as having discoursed on every subject, as if he had studied that alone. Or another Universal Doctor, like that Alanus ab Insulis formerly: a modern Fra Paolo—an *intelligentia per cuncta permeans*—although in a different way, a more metaphysical and analytical one. It used to be said of Brougham that he thought one ought to know something of everything and of everything something. Macqueen mentioned, in speaking of Dr. Johnson, when he met him in the Hebrides, that he talked on the subject of coining, till he thought that he (Johnson) had been bred in the Mint, but then he passed to brewing, and discoursed on that, as if he had been brought up in a brewery. The latter knowledge came of his intimacy with Thrale, no doubt. Let us think of Coleridge in this sort of light rather than as a poet or even as a man.

But such catholicity was a legacy from ancient times; it was the cue of many of our greatest ones—of men as different as Aristotle, Philip of Macedon, Cæsar, Cicero, Napoleon; the information and sympathy of these and a few more were incapable of becoming too wide, too varied.

Coleridge's physical constitution, never perhaps very robust, was gradually impoverished and enfeebled by constant mental tension, until the whole nature of the man became sublimated or volatilised, and his body seemed the fragile tenement of some "delighted" spirit.

For Coleridge's earliest years we are usually referred to the Recollections of Cottle and the Letters of Lamb. These, with Southey, were his oldest friends, and they were his friends to the last—more or less. Coleridge's own affection for the Lambs continued unabated till the hour of his death—but he did not see them so often latterly, and Lamb was accustomed to say that he did not like visiting a man at another man's house—in plainer English, Coleridge at Gilman's. We do not like to disturb the settled state of public opinion so far as to pronounce a slowly-formed and deliberate impression that the gentle Elia did not act quite rightly and kindly by the friend of his friendless youth; but that is an impression we have, and by it we propose to abide.

The comparative coolness of their relations explains the fewness of letters, as years went on, and the consequent necessity there is for looking elsewhere for traces of Coleridge. The service which Cottle and the Lamb correspondence perform down to a certain point, in fact, is accepted, as it were, by Alsop, Gilman, and Green, who thought themselves honoured in being trustees for after-comers of his thoughts or conceptions, oral and written. That much of Coleridge has been lost or misinterpreted, we must not complain; we must rather be grateful for what we have received.

It may sound like a truism to some, and like a paradox to others, to assert that the life of this illustrious Englishman is reserved for a future pen; and what I felt and feel is that it may be of some trifling use, as an help towards so arduous and responsible a labour, if, from a variety of scattered sources, I attempt to make less obscure two episodes in his life, to which he is known to have attached somewhat peculiar importance.

Most are well acquainted with the fact, that at two successive periods of the earlier part of his life, not very remote from each

other, Coleridge visited the Continent. Altogether he was out of England as much as four years. His ramble in Germany, which was his first essay in foreign travel, occupied the better part of two years (1798-99), and his tour in Italy and Sicily, with his stay at Malta, extended from the spring of 1804 to that of 1807.

We are so much in the way of regarding him from a purely *sit-at-home* point of view, as a peculiarly inactive and sedentary person, indisposed to stir, without powerful provocation or inducement, from the place where he happened to have domesticated himself, that there must be some interest incidental to a more copious and connected narrative than at present exists of Coleridge's Continental experiences and impressions.

It was in the month immediately succeeding the original formation of the acquaintance between him and Hazlitt, in the January of 1798, that Coleridge resolved to offer his services, as we learn from a letter to Joseph Cottle of February 18, in the capacity of assistant minister without salary to the Congregationalists at Bridgwater; but nothing came of this scheme; and some time after he left for Germany, greatly to the regret of that small circle of friends which included the Wordsworths, the Southseys, and the Lambs—brother and sister. Mary Lamb vied with Charles in love and admiration of Coleridge; the manner in which she invariably speaks of him in her confidential correspondence is a delightful thing; and with the affection there is always a little awe mixed up.

On the 16th September 1798, Coleridge, who had then recently accepted the liberal offer of the Wedgwoods of Etruria to allow him a small annuity, left Yarmouth in the packet for Hamburg, accompanied (according to Mr. Barron Field's statement in his *Life*) by Wordsworth himself. His departure made an unusually and strangely powerful impression on his mind; for, to use his own words, "I, for the first time in my life, beheld my native land retiring from me." He slept part of that night on deck, as the smell of the cabin was "at open war with his olfactories," he tells us, but about one in the morning was aroused from slumber by a shower of rain, and driven under shelter.

At four A.M. on Tuesday, land was sighted. At a place called Cuxhaven some of the passengers were dropped, and Coleridge, it seems, was indebted to the liberality of a fellow-passenger, a rich Dane, for the means of proceeding on to Hamburg, the captain

having demanded ten guineas a head for the additional distance. They were a good deal impeded by the fog, but at length they reached their destination on the following day, the 19th, at four o'clock.

After standing for a short time on the stairs near the Boom House, Hamburg, Coleridge and a Frenchman, whose acquaintance he had formed on board, went, the former to present his letters of recommendation, and the latter to look for an hotel. Coleridge's letters took him to a locality called the Young Ladies' Walk; his companion and he put up at an inn which went under the denomination of "The Wild Man." The very day after his arrival, he was introduced to a brother of Klopstock the poet, and to Professor Ebeling. At Klopstock's, he saw a portrait of Lessing, whom he thought, about the eyes, not unlike himself.

On the 23rd September, Coleridge, finding Hamburg disagree with him, went on to Ratzeburg by the stage coach. He describes the vehicle as bearing the same proportion to an English one which an elephant's ear does to a man's. He lodged and boarded with the pastor, and there he spent the Christmas of 1798.

It was a hard winter, that of 1798-99, and Coleridge's picture of the great lake of Ratzeburg, frozen over, is interesting:—"It is a mass," he says, "of thick transparent ice—a spotless mirror of nine miles in extent! The lowness of the hills, which rise from the shores of the lake, precludes the awful sublimity of Alpine scenery, yet compensates for the want of it by beauties of which this very lowness is a necessary condition. Yesterday morning I saw the lesser lake completely hidden by mist; but the moment the sun peeped over the hill, the mist broke in the middle, and in a few seconds stood divided, leaving a broad road all across the lake, and between these two walls the sunlight burst upon the ice, forming a road of golden fire, intolerably bright."

In the course of a few days he paid a visit to Klopstock—the poet himself, and was disappointed; for his expression did not strike Coleridge as at all intellectual; he was low in stature, had swollen legs, and no upper teeth. He could speak very little English, and that little was made half-unintelligible by the defect in his pronunciation. Coleridge's host, the pastor, told him that Klopstock was a German Milton. "A very *German* Milton indeed!!!" writes C. to a friend.

Coleridge's impressions of Germany and the Germans are



nowhere, we think, very minutely set down. He attended Blumenbach's Lectures on Physiology and Natural History at Göttingen; he also took lessons in Ulphilus from Professor Tyschen; and indeed now it was that he acquired that extensive knowledge of miscellaneous German literature by which his conversations are so distinguished and enriched. His study of the German metaphysicians, however, was only accomplished in part at this time; but he carried home with him a passion for a profounder intimacy with these abstruse writings, which was not long ungratified.

In the "Friend" Coleridge has printed at length the pathetic story of Maria Eleonora Schöning, to illustrate the oppressive and pernicious form of government which prevailed in his time at Nürnberg—a selfish and tyrannical oligarchy. His remark under this head is:—"The Imperial free towns of Germany are, with only two or three exceptions, enviably distinguished by the virtuous and primitive manners of the citizens, and by the parental character of their several governments." He may be presumed to have spoken (or written) here from personal observation, to a certain extent. The other place he instanced was Aix-la-Chapelle, which he described as spoiled by contact with the French.

Luther had always been a favourite with him, and when he went to the country which had given that great man birth, he did not forget the Wartburg:—"Whoever has sojourned in Eisenach will assuredly have visited the Wartburg, interesting by so many historical associations, which stands on a high rock, about two miles to the south of the city gate. To this Castle Luther was taken on his return from the Imperial Diet, where Charles V. had pronounced the ban upon him. . . ."

Was the professor mentioned in the following passage from one of his books the gentleman under whom he studied Ulphilus, in order to gain, if possible, a critical intimacy with the language? "A celebrated professor in a German University showed me a very pleasing print, entitled 'Toleration.' A Catholic priest, a Lutheran divine, a Calvinist minister, a Quaker, a Jew, and a philosopher, were represented, sitting round the same table, over which a winged figure hovered in the attitude of protection. 'For this harmless print,' said my friend, 'the artist was imprisoned, and having attempted an escape, was sentenced to draw the boats on the Danube with robbers and murderers' "——

One evening at Lamb's (it was one of the Wednesdays in the

Temple), Holcroft and Coleridge were arguing rather warmly together on transcendental topics, and the latter was riding the high German horse, as an eye-witness expresses it. Holcroft, it seems, had read Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" in the original, and considered himself, on the strength of this, a ripe German scholar and metaphysician.

"My dear Mr. Holcroft," said Coleridge, "you really put me in mind of a sweet pretty German girl, about fifteen, that I met with in the Hartz Forest in Germany, and who, one day, as I was reading the 'Limits of the Knowable and the Unknowable,' the profoundest of all his (Kant's) works, with great attention, came behind my chair, and leaning over, said, 'What, you read Kant? Why, I, that am a German born, don't understand him!'"

It is not generally known, we think, that Coleridge's visit to the Hartz Forest took place under rather agreeable circumstances. His companions were three Englishmen, whose acquaintance he had formed, at Göttingen: Dr. Parry, of Bath, Dr. Carlyon, of Truro, and Captain Parry, the navigator. A fifth individual completed the party, and that fifth was no other than the same John Chester, of whom there is an interesting account in Hazlitt's paper, "My first Acquaintance with Poets."

Passive and inert as Coleridge may have been when he was at home, or in later life, when his health failed him in so deplorable a measure, he decidedly appears to have lost no opportunities which were within his reach, while he was abroad in his young days. It was the same when he was in Italy and Sicily in 1804 and later; and, if we are not mistaken, these wanderings were beneficial to his health, bodily and mental. Lamb is said to have resorted to physical exercise, of which he took a prodigious amount, as a sort of distraction from brooding thoughts, more than from a sheer love of the thing, and to Coleridge, with his unceasing intellectual incubation, added to his tendency to corpulence, it was doubly and trebly necessary—it was vital. Unfortunately Coleridge was a martyr to asthma.

At the commencement of 1803, his health was, as it had been for some time past, very indifferent indeed. He suffered from lumbago and rheumatism, as well as from difficulty of respiration. In the autumn of the year, Southey, writing to his friend John May, says:—"Coleridge is with me (at Bristol), and I believe going abroad for his health, which suffers dreadfully from this climate."

Matters were not at all better in November, as may be supposed. The following occurs in a letter from Southey to John King, of November 19th, 1803; Southey is writing now from Keswick:—"Coleridge is now in bed with the lumbago. Never was poor fellow so tormented with such pantomimic complaints; his disorders are perpetually shifting, and he is never a week together without some one or other. He is arranging materials for what, if it be made, will be a most valuable work, under the title of 'Consolations and Comforts,' which will be the very essential oil of metaphysics, fragrant as otto of roses, and useful as wheat, rice, port wine, or any other necessary of human life."

At length, in the beginning of 1804, came the determination to try the effect of a change of climate and scene, and the invalid made up his mind to take advantage of a standing invitation from his friend, Dr. Stoddart, who was practising at that time with some success as an advocate at Malta. "He will set out by the first ship," writes his friend to Miss Barker.

Southey knew probably that it was the best, if not the only thing to be done, but he sorely grieved at the prospect of parting. In a letter to the lady just mentioned, he observes:—"Coleridge and I are the best companions possible, in almost all moods of mind, in all kinds of wisdom, and all kinds of nonsense, to the very heights and depths thereof;" but in a letter to C. himself, of March 14th, 1804, his feelings find a freer outlet:—"Your departure hangs upon me with something the same effect that the heavy atmosphere presses upon you—an unpleasant thought, that works like yeast, and makes me feel the animal functions going on. As for the manner of your going, you will be better off than in a king's ship. Now you are your own master; there you would have been a guest."

Coleridge, in fact, had moved up to town, and was making preparations to go. In a copy of Sir Thomas Browne's "Vulgar Errors," which Lamb bought for Coleridge on the 10th March, is this double memorandum, admitting us a little behind the curtain. It was just a few days before Coleridge started:—"C. Lamb, 9th March, 1804. Bought for S. T. Coleridge." "N.B.—It was on the 10th, on which day I dined and punched at Lamb's, and exulted in the having procured this 'Hydriotaphia,' and all the rest *lucra apposita*. S. T. C." Cottle, in his "Reminiscences," 1847, gives us some useful information about this episode.

Lamb saw Coleridge off, and the latter took with him among his letters one for Miss Stoddart from Miss Lamb, from which the subjoined is extracted :—"I will just write a few hasty lines to say Coleridge is setting off sooner than he expected, and I every moment expect him to call in one of his great hurrys for this. Charles intended to write by him, but has not ; most likely he will send a letter after him to Portsmouth. . . . I envy your brother the pleasure of seeing Coleridge drop in unexpectedly upon him. . . . Coleridge is very ill ; I dread the thoughts of his long voyage—write as soon as he arrives, whether he does or not, and tell me how he is. . . . He has got letters of recommendation to Governor Ball and God knows who, and he will talk and talk, and be wondrously admired. But I wish to write for him a *letter of recommendation* to Mrs. Stoddart, and to yourself, to take upon ye on his first arrival to be to him kind, affectionate nurses ; and mind now that you perform this duty faithfully, and write me a good account of yourself. Behave to him as you would to me or to Charles, if we came sick and unhappy to you. I have no news to send you, Coleridge will tell you how we are going on."

Lamb, in a postscript, says, "How do ? how do ? No time to write, S. T. C. going off in a great hurry. Ch. Lamb."

The precise date of Coleridge's departure is not apparently known ; but it was late in March 1804. On the 3rd April, Southey writes to Miss Barker :—"Coleridge is gone for Malta, and his departure affects me more than I let be seen. . . . It is now almost ten years since he and I met in my rooms at Oxford, which meeting decided the destiny of both ; and now when, after so many ups and downs, I am for a time settled under his roof, he is driven abroad in search of health." And in a letter to Coleridge himself, the same old friend says :—"Your going abroad had appeared to me so doubtful, or indeed improbable, an event, that the certainty comes to me like a surprise, and I feel at once what a separation the sea makes. . . . I shall often think, Coleridge, *quanto minus cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse*. God send you a speedy passage, a speedy recovery, and a speedy return !"

Coleridge arrived at his destination on the 18th April, 1804, and on the following day, which was Saturday, he walked out with Mr. and Mrs. Stoddart. He was very ill when he left England ; but perhaps the journey had restored his energies somewhat. He soon made the acquaintance of the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball,

## COLERIDGE

to whom he became strongly attached, and of whom he has left that beautiful and eloquent eulogium in the "Friend." Sir Alexander called on him on the 21st, and invited him to dinner. Coleridge had other letters of introduction, and one of them was to General Valet, whom he waited upon, he says, on the 23rd, notwithstanding his debility and the difficulty of breathing, which since his arrival he had begun to experience intermittently in a painful degree.

Miss Stoddart, the Doctor's sister (then out with him on a visit), wrote to Miss Lamb immediately on Coleridge's arrival. Her letter is lost, but from Miss Lamb's reply to it, one extract may be acceptable :—"Your letter, which contained the news of Coleridge's arrival, was a most welcome one, for we had begun to entertain very unpleasant apprehensions for his safety, and your kind reception of the forlorn wanderer gave me the greatest pleasure; and I thank you for it in my own and my brother's names. I shall depend upon you for hearing of his welfare; for he does not write himself, but as long as we know he's safe, and in such kind friends' hands, we do not mind. Your letters, my dear Sarah, are to me very very precious ones, they are the kindest, best, most natural ones I ever received. The one containing the account of the arrival of Coleridge [is] perhaps, the best I ever saw, and your old friend Charles is of my opinion. We sent it off to Mrs. Coleridge and the Wordsworths, as well, because we thought it our duty to give them the first notice we had of our dear friend's safety, as that we were proud of showing our Sarah's pretty letter."

Coleridge, for some time, remained with the Stoddarts; but an accidental circumstance led to an entire change in his plans and movements. Mr. Macauley, public Secretary, died very suddenly, and until his place could be supplied, Sir Alexander Ball asked Coleridge to discharge the duties of the vacant post. Coleridge, if he had had proper regard to his state of health, would have excused himself, but he accepted the proposal, perhaps without an adequate idea of what his acceptance involved.

He appears to have given some practical attention to business during his provisional occupation of the Secretaryship: which is a point of view in which we are not accustomed to consider him; for he tells us that it was in the course of examining the treasury accounts in the spring of 1805, that he discovered that the £1000 awarded to Sir Alexander Ball some years before had never been claimed. "I observed the circumstance," he says,

“and noticed it to the Governor, who had suffered it to escape altogether from his memory, for the latter years at least.”

“For months past,” he lets us know after he was thoroughly settled, “[I have been] incessantly employed in official tasks, subscribing, examining, administering oaths, auditing, &c.,” and this continuous and irksome occupation, which came unexpectedly upon him, neutralised the benefit which the change might otherwise have wrought in his constitution. Under date of April 22, 1804, indeed a very few days after his original landing, he says :— “I was reading when I was taken ill, and felt an oppression of my breathing, and convulsive snatching in my stomach and limbs,” and throughout his absence abroad on this occasion there is no reason to question that these visitations were both frequent and sudden. His devotion to business must have aggravated them.

Yet in a letter from Mr. (afterwards Sir Humphry) Davy to Coleridge’s friend, Mr. Poole, of Nether-Stowey, which Cottle quotes under the date of 1804, Coleridge is mentioned as being in the enjoyment of good spirits. At least, he had described himself as being so, when he last wrote to Mr. D. from Malta. “I have received a letter,” Mr. Davy writes to Mr. Poole, “from Coleridge within the last three weeks. He writes from Malta in good spirits, and, as usual, from the depth of his being. God bless him ! He was intended for a great man. I hope and trust he will, at some period, appear such.”

His intimacy with Ball, which appears to have produced a coolness between the Stoddarts and himself, led him to form a very high estimate of that gentleman’s accomplishments and intellectual capacity. He says :—“It was the Governor’s custom to visit every casal throughout the island once, if not twice, in the course of each summer ; and during my residence there, I had the honour of being his constant, and most often his only companion in these rides, to which I owe some of the happiest and most instructive hours of my life.”

This is very explicit and emphatic : surely these lines deserve at our hands a larger share of attention than has yet been paid to them. And then he gives (at his own expense) an instance of Sir Alexander’s acuteness. He says :—“Having observed in some casual conversation that, though there were doubtless masses of matter unorganised, I saw no ground for asserting a mass of unorganised matter, Sir A. B. paused, and then said to me with

## COLERIDGE

that frankness of manner which made his very rebuke gratifying, 'The distinction is just, and, now I understand you, abundantly obvious, but hardly worth the trouble of your inventing a puzzle of words to make it appear otherwise.' I trust the rebuke was not lost on me."

Two anecdotes, related by Coleridge elsewhere, appear to belong to this part of the subject:—"I well remember, when in Valetta in 1805, asking a boy who waited on me, what a certain procession, then passing, was, and his answering, with great quietness, that it was Jesus Christ, *who lives here (sta di casa qui)*, and when he comes out, it is in the shape of a wafer. But 'Eccellenza,' said he, smiling and correcting himself, 'non e Cristiano.'"

"A marquis of ancient family applied to Sir Alexander Ball to be his valet. 'My valet!' said Ball, 'what can you mean, sir?' The marquis said he hoped he should then have the honour of presenting petitions to his Excellency. 'Oh, that's it, is it?' said Sir Alexander: 'my valet, sir, brushes my clothes and brings them to me. If he dared to meddle with matters of public business, I should kick him downstairs.'"

The sixth essay of the second volume of the "Friend" in the edition of 1837 was chiefly written at Malta, at the request of Sir Alexander Ball, as is stated in so many words in a foot-note by Coleridge or his editor. It is, we believe, the only thing, for the composition of which during his stay in the island there is direct and positive evidence.

The public library was no resource to Coleridge, for it contained very little that he wanted. He says of it:—"Even in respect to works of military science, it is contemptible—as the sole public library of so numerous and splendid an order, most contemptible—and in all other departments of literature it is below contempt." But his friends the Governor and Dr. Stoddart had books of their own, probably, to which he could resort; and some (as we shall see presently) he had taken out with him.

Miss Stoddart was her brother's guest during nearly the whole term of Coleridge's stay at Malta, and although the Stoddarts saw less of Coleridge after his withdrawal from their roof, they still met with tolerable regularity, and Miss Stoddart continued to transmit to Miss Lamb intelligence of S. T. C.'s *goings-on* and eccentricities.

Miss L., in one of her answers, has this passage:—"All I can gather from your clear, and I have no doubt faithful history of

Maltese politics, is that the good doctor, though a firm friend, an excellent fancier of Brooches, a good husband, an upright advocate, and in short all that they say upon tomb-stones, for I do not recollect that they celebrate any fraternal virtues there, yet is he but a moody brother—that your sister-in-law is pretty much like what all sisters-in-law have been since the first happy invention of the happy marriage state—that friend Coleridge has undergone no alteration by crossing the Atlantic, for his friendliness to you as well as all the oddities you mention are just what one ought to look for from him. . . . I heartily wish for the arrival of Coleridge. A few such evenings as we have sometimes passed with him would wind us up and set us agoing again.”

Coleridge left Malta on the 27th September 1805, upon the arrival of the individual nominated by the Home Government to the Secretaryship. He passed over to Sicily.

Cottle, in his “Early Recollections of Coleridge,” says :—“Mr. Coleridge sustained one serious loss, at quitting Malta, which he greatly deplored. He had packed in a large case all his books and MSS., with all the letters received by him while on the island. His directions were, to be forwarded to England by the first ship : with Bristol as its ultimate destination. It was never received, nor could he ever learn what became of it.”

Miss Lamb’s letters to Miss Stoddart do not cease speaking of Coleridge after Miss Stoddart’s return to England. In one, Miss L. pertinently asks for fuller intelligence concerning the state of relations between S. T. C. and the Doctor latterly :—“Was Coleridge with you ?” she inquires, “or did your brother and Coleridge argue long arguments, till between the two great arguers there grew a little coolness, or perchance the mighty friendship between Coleridge and your sovereign governor Sir Alexander Ball might create a kind of jealousy ; for we fancy something of a coolness did exist from the little mention ever made of C. in your brother’s letters.” “I have heard [from the Dawes],” Miss Lamb says in a letter of later date, “that Coleridge was lately going through Sicily to Rome with a party, but that, being unwell, he returned back to Naples. We think there is some mistake in his accounts, and that his intended journey was in his former jaunt to Naples. . . . I have written to Mrs. Coleridge to tell her her husband is at Naples. Your brother slightly named his being there.”



The Lambs and his other friends in London by no means stood alone in this state of incertitude and anxiety, for Coleridge was very sparing of his correspondence both before and after leaving Malta, and his own family and the Southey's became most uneasy and uncomfortable about him, seeing the perturbed condition of the Continent.

Southey writes to Mr. Danvers, February 3, 1806 :—"Still no tidings of Coleridge : it is some consolation to know that no letters have been received for many weeks from that part of the Austrian dominion, which is occupied by the French. It is not unlikely that he has returned, either to Naples or Malta, and may be waiting there for a ship." On the 15th, there was still no intelligence. "We are seriously uneasy about him," Southey says to his son ; "it is above two months since he ought to have been here ; our hope is, that finding the Continent overrun by the French, he may have returned to Malta."

Three months elapsed, and no one had heard where he was, or what was his fate. Southey writes to his friend Danvers on the 13th May :—"No letters from Coleridge of a later date than August. We hear of him by several quarters ; he was at Rome in the beginning of February, much noticed there, and going to spend a few weeks in the country on a visit. This is the news from Englishmen who saw him there. It is not to be supposed that letters should arrive regularly from other persons, and all his be lost. Wordsworth thinks he has delayed writing, till he finds it painful to think of it. Meantime we daily expect to hear of his return."

May passed, and June, and still they were without news. It was growing positively alarming. But all this time the wanderer was safe enough, and the fears for him perfectly groundless. He had, as it has been stated, sailed from Malta to Sicily, and between September 1805 and the present time, our invalid, having taken out a new lease of health, had made the tour of that island, and visited Naples, Florence, and Rome. He proceeded to Leghorn, where he embarked on an American vessel bound for England. On the homeward route this ship was chased by a Frenchman, and Coleridge's captain obliged him, for fear of consequences, to throw all his MSS. overboard. He had the honour of being identified at Rome as the author of the anti-Buonapartist articles in the *Morning Post*, and narrowly escaped arrest. He was put on his guard, and

quitted the city precipitately with a Papal passport. Such is the account usually credited. Now let us be allowed to offer Coleridge's own narrative, scanty as it is, which we have to do by grouping together in one view certain scattered passages in his writings. What would not his family have given to have been in possession of a quarter of the information which the reader has here before him!

"It is interesting to pass from Malta to Sicily—from the highest specimen of an inferior race, the Saracenic, to the most degraded class of a superior race, the European. I found everything in and about Sicily had been exaggerated by travellers, except two things—the folly of the Government and the wretchedness of the people. *They* did not admit of exaggeration. The most cowardly of the European nations, the Neapolitans and Sicilians, those among whom the fear of death exercises the most tyrannous influence relatively to their own persons, are the very men who least fear to take away the life of a fellow-citizen by poison or assassination."

"As I was descending from Mount Etna with a very lively talkative guide, we passed through a village (I think called) Nicolozzi, when the host happened to be passing through the street. Every one was prostrate; my guide became so, and, not to be singular, I went down also. After resuming our journey, I observed in my guide an unusual seriousness and long silence which, after many *hums* and *hahs*, was soon interrupted by a low bow, and leave requested to ask a question. This was of course granted, and the ensuing dialogue took place. *Guide*. Signor, are you then a Christian?—*Coleridge*. I hope so.—*Guide*. What, are all Englishmen Christians?—*Coleridge*. I hope and trust they are.—*Guide*. What, are you not Turks? Are you not damned eternally?—*Coleridge*. I trust not, through Christ.—*Guide*. What, you believe in Christ then?—*Coleridge*. Certainly.

"This answer produced another long silence. At length, my guide again spoke, still doubting the great point of my Christianity:—*Guide*. I am thinking, Signor, what is the difference between you and us, that you are to be certainly damned.—*Coleridge*. Nothing very material, nothing that can prevent our going to heaven, I hope. We believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.—*Guide* (interrupting me). Oh! those damned priests! what liars they are! But (pausing) we can't do without them; we can't

go to heaven without them. But tell me, Signor, what are the differences?—*Coleridge*. Why, for instance, we do not worship the Virgin.—*Guide*. And why not, Signor?—*Coleridge*. Because, though holy and pure, we think her still a woman, and therefore do not pay her the honour due to God?—*Guide*. But do you not worship Jesus, who sits on the right hand of God?—*Coleridge*. We do.—*Guide*. Then why not worship the Virgin, who sits on the left?—*Coleridge*. I did not know she did. If you can show it me in the Scriptures, I shall readily agree to worship her. ‘Oh!’ said my man, with uncommon triumph, and cracking his fingers, ‘Securo, Signor! securo, Signor!’”

Coleridge, however, seems to have imbibed in Germany a sentiment at least of tolerance for the school of free thought and liberal inquiry which had some time since set in, and which has, as we know, received such enormous development. For in a letter after his return home to his wife he refers to the German arguments against the authenticity of the Book of Esther, and speaks of reading passages to his son Hartley, pointing out the “startling gross improbabilities” therein contained.

“Baron Von Humboldt, brother of the great traveller, paid me the following compliment at Rome:—‘I confess, Mr. Coleridge, I had my suspicions that you were here in a political capacity of some sort or other; but upon reflection, I acquit you. For in Germany, and, I believe, elsewhere on the Continent, it is generally understood that the English Government, in order to divert the envy and jealousy of the world as to the wealth, power, and ingenuity of your nation, makes a point, as a *ruse de guerre*, of sending out fools of gentlemanly birth and connections as diplomatists to the courts abroad. An exception is perhaps sometimes made for a clever fellow, if sufficiently libertine and unprincipled.’

“I was not indeed silly enough to take as anything more than a violent hyperbole of party debate, Mr. Fox’s assertion that the *late war* . . . was a war produced by the *Morning Post*. . . . As little do I regard the circumstance that I was a specified object of Buonaparte’s resentment during my residence in Italy in consequence of those essays in the *Morning Post* during the Peace of Amiens. Of this I was warned, directly, by Baron Von Humboldt, the Prussian Plenipotentiary, who at that time was the Minister of the Prussian Court at Rome, and indirectly, through his secretary,

by Cardinal Fesch himself. Nor do I lay any greater weight on the confirming fact, that an order for my arrest was sent from Paris, from which danger I was rescued by the kindness of a noble Benedictine and the gracious connivance of that good old man the present Pope."

"At Florence there is an unfinished bust of Brutus by Michael Angelo, under which a cardinal wrote the following distich:—

"Dum Bruti effigiem sculptor de marmore finxit  
In mentem sceleris venit, et abstinuit."

"... An English nobleman, indignant at this distich, wrote immediately under it the following:—

"Brutum effinxisset sculptor, sed mente recursum  
Multum viri virtus; sistit et obstupuit."

"Now which," asks Coleridge, "is the nobler or more moral sentiment, the Italian cardinal's or the English nobleman's?"

The traveller, long lost and looked for, and at last recovered to his country, friends, and domestic hearth, reached England somewhere about the end of November 1806, for in a letter to Manning of December 5 that year Lamb expressly announces his return, as well as his intention of lecturing at the Royal Institution. On the 10th April, 1807, Southey writes to Miss Barker, "Mrs. Coleridge has gone to her husband's relations in Devonshire, and he meets her somewhere on the road." As for Southey, he does not seem to have seen anything of him for a full twelvemonth after that; for the earliest tidings we get of Coleridge's presence in Southey's part of the country occurs in a letter from Southey to Lieutenant S., September 9, 1808:—"Coleridge is arrived at last, about half as big as the house. He came over with Wordsworth on Monday, and returned with him on Wednesday."

Coleridge brought back with him to England the warmest sentiments of esteem and admiration for the virtues and talents of Ball; and Ball's death touched him deeply. He says, in the "Friend":—"Ah! how could I be otherwise than affected by whatever reminded me of that daily and familiar intercourse with him, which made the fifteen months, from May 1804 to October 1805, in many respects the most memorable and instructive period of my life! Ah! how could I be otherwise than most deeply affected,

## COLERIDGE

when there was still lying on my table the paper which, the day before, had conveyed to me the unexpected and most awful tidings of this man's death ! ”

Elsewhere, he speaks of Ball as “ a truly great man, the best and greatest public character that I had ever the opportunity of making myself acquainted with. I shall cling to the hope that I may yet be enabled to record his good deeds more fully and regularly ; that then, with a sense of comfort, not without a subdued exultation, I may raise heavenward from his honoured tomb the glistening eye of a humble but ever grateful friend.”

His voyage and change of air and scene had brought very slight benefit to his health. There is a most desponding letter to Cottle, written soon after his arrival in England, in answer to an invitation to visit Bristol. “ On my return to Bristol (when-ever that may be) I will certainly give you the right hand of old fellowship ; but alas ! you will find me the wretched wreck of what you knew me, rolling rudderless. My health is extremely bad,”—and so the letter goes on. One finds him writing in a borrowed copy of Beaumont and Fletcher, April 17, 1807 :—“ God bless you, dear Charles Lamb. I am dying ; I feel I have not many weeks left.” He uses the same tone in one to Lamb, February 1808—“ O Charles, I am very, very ill. Vixi.” Even in 1811, the sombre persuasion that his end was near, seems to have been still strong, for in returning an old copy of Donne's Poems to Lamb in that year, he says, “ I shall die soon, my dear Charles Lamb, and then you will not be vexed that I have bescribbled your book.”

So constant were these forebodings that in a letter of 1821 to Gilman, Lamb copied out as a postscript the entry of fourteen years before in the Beaumont and Fletcher, and semi-jocularly alluded to his dear old friend—moribund in 1807, yet pretty well in health so long after, and able to take part in entertaining company at Highgate.

Yet he survived, as we know, till the July of 1834, and, which is more, in the summer of 1828 he made a tour through parts of Holland and Belgium, proceeding up the Rhine as far as Bergen.

To those who are interested in the character and likenesses of this great man, the subjoined extract from a letter addressed by Southey to a friend, from Keswick, July 2, 1808, may prove of interest :—

“ . . . I thank you likewise for your intentions with respect

to Coleridge. You would have found him the most wonderful man living in conversation, but the most impracticable one for a painter . . . his countenance is the most variable I have ever seen." With regard to his features, he says:—"Look at them separately you would hardly think it possible that they could belong to one head."

## IX

### TENNYSON

It has been, and still remains, a common phrase in criticizing the labours of Shakespear, to say that the great poet was unequal in his performances, and it was Ben Jonson's observation that it would have been well, if he had blotted far more of what he transmitted to us than he did. No doubt it would be easy to select from his writings many passages and expressions, which we could desire to see altered, and not a few, perhaps, without which, to say the least, his reputation would rest unimpaired.

It is because it has often struck me that what is true of Shakespear is almost equally so of our late laureate, that I am tempted to put upon paper certain conceptions or impressions, which an occasional perusal of Tennyson's masterly productions left behind it. It is because I considered that there has been scarcely a verse-writer in this country at any period, whose works have been altogether so distinguished by beauties and excellencies, that I embarked on such a hazardous enterprise. I am fully sensible that from the present point of view a comparison between Tennyson and the poet of Stratford is not one to be pressed too far, in as much as any imperfections in the text of Shakespear (and we all know that they are barely numerable) are to be ascribed in the largest measure to that mysterious indifference to his literary fame, which led him to leave his plays and poems alike to the mercy of the printer. The blemishes in the writings of his modern successor are attributable to a diametrically opposite cause, as I shall try to establish. The latter experienced in his earlier career undeserved ridicule and abuse, and in his middle period—perhaps during the remainder of his life—more than merited applause and homage. Surely the time has arrived for something like discriminative criticism, and I hope I shall not be thought to make a rash beginning by an exposition of my personal view, that among his writings there are finer things than in all the ancient poets or—except Mr. Swinburne at his best—the later.

The wide range occupied by Tennyson's works seems naturally to imply the possession by the author of a corresponding versatility of power, and it is, I think, beyond question that, to a great extent, a careful study of the Poems as a whole must result in a favourable and flattering verdict. We are able to discern almost throughout the depth and truth of the inner sense; the powerful, fresh, and picturesque imagery; the lucid and noble language; and the vigour, grace, tenderness and pathos masterfully blended and balanced, so agreeably contrasting with the thinness and labouring obscurity of conception and impression even in the more favourite verse-writers of our day. I can only think of him as I think of Byron and Swinburne, and both of those, especially of course Byron, how different they are!

Some of Tennyson's pieces are almost above praise indeed; in others the task of selecting passages and descriptions of supreme merit is easy enough. In the exordium to "A Dream of Fair Women," the poet modestly cites the performance by Chaucer as that which suggested his own composition; and perchance one could scarcely lay one's finger on an item in the whole collection which so triumphantly proves the masterly faculty of keeping a nominal prototype within its due limits, and creating a new treasure of fancy for us on the broader and deeper basis of contemporary thought; and it may not be an overstatement, that had Tennyson not admitted us into his confidence, we might have remained strangers to the source of his inspiration.

We find, side by side, the noblest grasp, the most soaring flights, and the most exquisite delicacy of finish; and to say that this writer displayed an extraordinary and unprecedented faculty is only tantamount to saying that the sea is green and the firmament is azure. But this equally grand and inevitable admission renders it only the more to be lamented that an author, who so wealthily contributed to our pure intellectual enjoyment, and whose works will undoubtedly form no unimportant part of the literary heirlooms bequeathed to the coming ages, did not exercise a wiser and more generous discretion, when he had, more than once, the opportunity of reconsideration and revision afforded to him; and the misfortune is so much the graver in this case, that no lapse of time can well undo the mischief. Editorial acumen and posthumous intervention have been of mutual benefit to Shakespear and the world; but there can be no valid pretence for



stepping in between Tennyson and his poetical compositions, as he left them to us.

Might not advantage have very properly and very happily been taken of the collected edition of 1878, at all events, for such a purpose as I am suggesting?—to correct oversights, to set right places where the metre was faulty, or there were phraseological solecisms? Should not this have been done? It was not. A few additions are here and there observable, but they are invariably additions for the worse. Our poet himself admonishes us that it is an error

“To add and alter many times,  
Till all is ripe and rotten.”

But here we are encountered by the opposite extreme, and in the presence of an evident habit of taking occasion to turn over the leaves of his books, and of inserting lines and stanzas, not so much where they were wanted as where they could be squeezed in or tacked on. The deprecatory sentence which I have just quoted, Tennyson, as I say, did not altogether in his own case respect, as a survival of “trial” copies and sheets now under my eyes with an abundant crop of literal and other corrections testifies, and yet there remained, after all, an ample residue of blemishes unrevised, because, I infer, unperceived. The “*Lover’s Tale*” was forty-six years under correction, before it took its final shape in 1879. At least there was no want of a sense of the possibility of improvement.

I must now begin to illustrate my meaning. In the dedication to her late Majesty, dated 1851, before the collected impression, the sense and tone are good; but the construction is awkward, especially in the third and fourth stanzas. But at any rate the lines are superior by a long way to those on the death of the Prince Consort. They belong in reality to a small group of four pieces dealing with a common theme, and written in a similar mood.

In “*Edward Gray*,” a very charming little poem, we are all offended on the threshold by this:—

“Sweet Emma Moreland of yonder town  
Met me walking on yonder way.”

Why was this clumsy and glaring tautology retained from edition to edition? And, again, at the very close there is this conspicuous discordance:—

"There lies the *body* of Helen Adair,  
And there the *heart* of Edward Gray."

Coleridge in his "Table Talk" declares that he could not quite understand Tennyson's metric system. Now, in the little song near the beginning of the "Princess" the line—

"We fell out, my wife and I—"

halts uncomfortably on a short foot; but an infinitely more serious fault is latent in the phrase "thro' the land," conveying an idea of distance and perspective, which is foreign to the sense and highly injurious to the beauty of the notion. One may, no doubt, see on a moment's reflection what is intended; but that is not sufficient—not even for poetical purposes. Obscurity of style may exist without obscurity of meaning. A poem ought not to partake of the nature of a conundrum, but should be susceptible of an instantaneous translation into form and substance in the mind's eye. In the song under consideration the first line suggests one train of thought, and the second suggests something totally different. "Ah!" one is apt to mutter, "by land he means corn-land, *i.e.* a field of corn. Why could he not have said as much? In the edition of 1878 before me this touching lyric has a supplementary stanza, which would ruin it, if that were possible. The lines, as they were originally written, represented a natural sentiment effectively expressed. The writer, instead of removing existing defects, added to them.

The "Princess" is indeed a Medley, but in a somewhat different sense, I apprehend, from that which the author contemplated. It is a medley of old romantic names and circumstances and of modern philosophy and advanced ideas. Tennyson was somewhat addicted to the personal and conversational style in his compositions, as we perceive in "Audley Court," the fine fragment of "Morte d'Arthur," and elsewhere. He was fond of interweaving his individuality—his Ego—with the less direct and definite enunciations of mere sentiment. The ancient bards were less self-asserting; but at least from the Augustan age it became fashionable for the author, more especially the poet, to drop the mask, and speak *propria personâ*.

"Queen Mary, A Drama," was, I believe, Tennyson's earliest effort in this particular way; and he entered on the province of

## TENNYSON

the playwright with as little aptitude for it as a great living author equally incapable of comprehending his true bent and strength. The subject was not Mary, Queen of Scots, about whom a cartload of verse and prose had been already written from time to time, but poor "bloody Queen Mary," who ever since a Catholic priest penned in her honour "a Ballad of the Marigold," had been sadly neglected by the poets. Here was therefore nearly virgin soil for a dramatist, notwithstanding the old tragedy of "Sir Thomas Wyatt" by Webster and Decker.

So the laureate borrowed a Holinshed, as I have the best of reasons to know, and set to work; and this was the fruit. I well recollect the uplifted hands and eyebrows of the *cognoscenti*, the first mysterious paragraph in the papers, shadowing out the prospect of happiness in store for us, then a second intimation that the boon was nearer at hand, and at last the joyous announcement that the work was in the press! What was it? What signified these hushed voices, this buzz, these awe-stricken gestures, succeeded by newspaper jubilations? Something to cast into the shade all that everybody else had written about the royal lady? Something to eclipse all that he himself had heretofore done? Not quite so, I fear. Rather the *mons parturiens*.

Among his dramatic essays it is somewhat difficult to decide which was the least happy; but perhaps that distinction is claimable by his Locksley—a name equivocally reminiscent of earlier and better days. The treatment of the epic of Robin Hood and its presentation on the stage, where the real story so readily lent itself to a capable artist, and where so many valuable points might have been made by an even servile loyalty to authenticated facts, seems to exhibit the result of ignorant or wilful distortion of the truth. Our poet took the pretty nursery tale, which he had studied in his youth, like the rest of us; but this was so far not the worst part of the matter, for out of poor material Shakespear knew how to evolve a fine creation of his own. Then he was a dramatist, was he not? The weakness of the dramatic gift in Tennyson extends to some of his undramatic productions. For instance, in "Locksley Hall" the scene opens with the principal *persona* coming on the ground, accompanied by an escort, one of whom at least carries a bugle-horn. He invites his friends to leave him, and if they require his presence, to blow on the horn Robin-Hood-wise. We lose sight of the escort, and have to listen to the delirium

about the faithless lady-cousin, whom we are entitled for some time to treat as still open to persuasion, till without any preparatory notice she is revealed and denounced as the wife of another and less worthy suitor. There is no distinct thread of story; the whole is a piece of incoherent extravagance. The poet, after raving about my cousin Amy for some time, suddenly recollects "his merry comrades," as his ear catches the note of the horn! Merry indeed! Left shivering and whistling through their fingers in the early morning. No wonder that he is afraid, lest his foolish passion may be "a target for their scorn." They must have all left their beds at something like daybreak with empty stomachs. The following lines might assist in rendering the conclusion less abrupt. I make a present of them to a future editor:—

*"Bugle-bearer.*

O comrade, why so long? Since our supper yester-night  
 We have not had among us all a crust of bread to bite.  
 I sounded twice, I sounded thrice, upon the bugle-horn:  
 Ah! I wish you had not brought us out so early in the morn!  
 You are dying for your breakfast, just as we are; come along;  
 When you've put some victuals into you, let's hear about your wrong.  
 We, too, have known our troubles. Now, old fellow, don't give way;  
 Lord! sir, there's plenty of 'em: if one won't, another may.

*Chorus.*

Nay, we will not hear a word. You are paler than a ghost.  
 You can tell us all about it o'er the ham and buttered toast.

*[Exeunt omnes.]*

But the whole performance, embellished as it is by passages and phrases of enchanting merit and strength, presents the same deformities as "Maud" and other of the longer compositions of the same class—that wild, vague, obscure vein of declamation, which oppresses, sates, and repels. No chord of sympathy is touched. The poet raves at those behind the scenes, of whom we are supposed to know nothing definite. The secret of the baseness of Maud, of that of the heroine of "Locksley Hall," and of one or two more (unless they are all identical) has died with their reproachful and relentless lover, but certainly the provocation and the wrong should have been severe to justify such a *revanche*, such a frantic outburst of opprobrious and diversified invective.

The resemblance between those pieces belonging to the autobiographical series holds good, too, in the tone of general misanthropy, which might have better become the sorrows and sufferings of a Byron, and here suggest unrealism and a struggle for melodramatic effect. It would demand a very slight disturbance of the metrical arrangement to interchange parts of "Maud" and "Locksley Hall"; they could be dovetailed into either rhapsody with equal fitness. Forsooth, to use an expression of Mrs. Procter in writing to Mrs. Jameson in 1851, where she refers to Tennyson's new book, there is too much that is "so really bad."

The verses entitled "Buonaparte" I take to be trash, nor are the "Goose" and the "Grandmother" much better, and they are not classed with the juvenilia. Tennyson had a very subdued sense of fun. The first is a composition worthy of the Tory organs in Anti-Jacobin times. It is such a matter as Gifford or the author of "Noctes Ambrosianæ" might have thrown off in a moment of fanatical impulse. On the contrary, for an author so weak in humour, "Will Waterproof's Monologue" is as good a thing of the kind as we have, and by far the best achievement of Tennyson in the way of lighter sentiment. It outshines all the earlier efforts of Goldsmith and others; and nothing so excellent has been written since. The beeswing glimmers through it. It is a retrospect through not too long and crowded a vista at a period of life, when many of the finest lyrics had been made public, and is intentionally and properly free from metaphysical and psychical subtleties. The scene is laid at an enviable moment, when he did not foresee how much he was to write, which would have been better—for him and us—left unwritten. Better, too, had it been, if he had not made Ganymede to rhyme with breed! Would he have treated Aphrodite as an anapaest?

The provincialisms in the "Northern Farmer" were of the same stamp and value as the slang in Bulwer's "Pelham"—not exactly, however, as in the latter case, at second-hand, from a dictionary, but from an imperfect syllabic grasp of what the poet had actually heard. There is a copy of the production with the language revised throughout, probably on some hint from a friend, who knew better, although Tennyson was by no means open to conviction under such circumstances.

The Arthur series seems to have no claim to a station in

literature (if we except the splendid fragment in the *Miscellaneous Poems*), superior to that enjoyed by the old metrical romances, which Tennyson (consciously or otherwise) assimilated, with this disadvantage on the laureate's side, that his compositions want altogether the quasi-historical interest, the philological value, and the rich contemporary colouring, to which age has lent a character and worth of their own. It can hardly be said that any of these features gain in a modern paraphrase, however elegant and faithful. What, I ask, would the newspapers have said to these efforts of the modern muse, if they had appeared with a different name or with no name at all? The Arthur group was of course facilitated by the presence of a readily utilizable nucleus or foundation. The first idea of a wheel would have been more difficult than it perhaps proved, had it not been suggested by the horizontal section of a felled tree. These poems are planned on too large a scale, and are scarcely more poetical or original than Macaulay's "History of England." They constitute an indifferent version of the old copies with a sad amount at once of dilution and dilation. Some of the mythological works of William Morris, which are merely polished narrations in the metrical form, were prompted by the prior labours of Tennyson. But in both instances there is a prosaic and prolix amplification of an already mythical and anachronistic account. The prototypes of Tennyson and Morris transferred to the primitive and barbarous period of their *dramatis personæ* the manners and appointments of their own; so that the nineteenth century superstructure on the fourteenth or fifteenth century fiction may be pronounced fairly unauthentic and signally hybrid.

In the "Brook," rich enough in beauties and not deficient in blemishes, the very opening lines seem to manifest the force of antithesis, in the friend's contempt for cash—the *auri sacra fames* so strongly present in the poet; and I might, taking them out of their setting, apply to Tennyson the lines meant to apply to another:—

"For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and share,  
And mellow metres more than cent for cent."

We come across the same possibly insensible emanation or reflection from the writer's own very worldly nature in "Maud" more than once—that composition which, like "In Memoriam," betrays in many places its casual compilation and not always too

careful or skilful reduction into form and sequence. The numbered divisions of the poem are almost superfluous; it is a string of rambling, inconsequent, and sometimes almost hysterical rhapsodies eulogistic and denunciatory by turn, and descending to the most level commonplace on one page, rising to true poetical sublimity in the next. A piece of strange, irritating patchwork. Much of the versification is deplorable—mere sing-song. O, that it had been infinitely briefer!

Some of the allusions of a bitter and abusive character may be referrible to incidents in the author's youthful career. This singular production resembles "Locksley Hall" in its mixture of beautiful suggestion, insincere æstheticism, and trite conventionality. It was probably fortunate for their families that the authors of "Maud" and of "Love is Enough" were practical men of business; but the discovery prejudices the illusion. Shakespear, it is true, had an eye to the commercial side; but such of his lyrical productions as are of a sentimental or passionate cast belong to the period of his youth. A man of letters or an artist may make money by his works, as Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Swinburne have, without being a Tennyson or a Morris. Mr. Ruskin represented the chivalry of literature; he was a better Arthur than a hundred Arthur Hallams. Tennyson and Morris betrayed a cold and calculating pharisaism veneered with a specious and stately phraseology. The latter was a free agent in religious matters and allusions; and Byron shook himself loose from all social and conventional restraints. In Tennyson one observes in his attitude toward theology a timid or cowardly compliance, and one meets with lines as near to absolute nonsense as could be desired. The vein of thought in "Maud" reappears in the "Talking Oak," in the lines beginning—

"All night have the roses heard"—

and it is a phase of the notion one naturally gets, but does not always, is seldom able, to put into verse, more especially such verse, when one is in a forest, and beholds veterans, which might have had some Druid to their planter, or on which the eyes of King Alfred might have fallen.

We perceive a curious illustration of the artifices of literary workmanship in the poem entitled "Godiva," where a sort of prologue might lead the too confiding or ingenuous reader to suppose

that the whole piece was the product of a reverie on Coventry bridge. The meaning and the fact must be understood, of course, to be that the idea of composing a version of the legend occurred to the great writer under the circumstances described, and that he subsequently shaped and completed the work at home—a work, such as it is, interspersed with rich imagery, but not free from deplorable shortcomings, which, had a friendly eye detected, ought to have been removed. It breathes the air of a youthful effort. What author of like rank would have committed the error in taste of repeating in two successive places, “clothed on with chastity,” and apart from a few characteristic touches of style, the whole is less poetical than many a passage in Holinshed and Fox, where the text merely renders historical episodes with literal simplicity, and relies for effect on the inherent interest or beauty of the narrative.

The “Godiva” piece surely exemplifies one of the writer’s less happy methods, in importing, as he did also in the “Morte d’Arthur” fragment, into serious poetical theses the lax, almost impertinent, familiarity tolerable only in *vers de société*. Its pretence to spontaneous inspiration may be read side by side with the story of the line in some poem, which cost seventeen pipes. And let me ask, what sort of a place did Tennyson imagine Mercian Coventry to be?

A great intellectual artist, carrying to exceptional perfection certain gifts, Tennyson was a close and affectionate student of Nature, and a happy realizer of her beauties on paper. He has depicted for us with laborious minuteness and in language generally correct and generally melodious the wonders of mountain and valley, of the brook and the waterfall, of the combe and the meadow, and, as in the processes of ordinary thought, has spell-bound us with the profundity and delicacy of his insight. Many others have as perfectly comprehended these mysteries. Many others before him excelled the poet in their familiarity with botanical and other kindred sciences; but no one ever in an equal measure united with the knowledge of the country and its characteristics the power of clothing his conception in a diction so graceful, so obviously appropriate, so chaste and so fresh. At the same time, we are not long enabled, in reading this author, to forget that he neither claims nor bears comparison with our common rural singers; his lordship strikes one as a condescending



observer of Nature rather than as a worshipper ; and it is difficult to turn over a page without discovering or being reminded that, if we are not in communion with a peer of the realm, we are so at least with a gentleman of position and fortune. Even when he penned the "Lord of Burleigh," a poor sort of performance, and perhaps the very poorest version of the story we have, he made the landscape-painter a foil to the great and rich aristocrat ; he might as well have feigned him a strolling bard and musician ; his painter was surely a designer of tavern-signs, in whom the village maiden saw only her equal.

Tennyson did not constitute any exception to the general rule that sequels are unfortunate. Look at "Locksley Hall" and its didactic tag, and at the "May Queen" and the sorry appendix to it!—two masterpieces spoiled by being thus overweighted. But "Locksley Hall" more emphatically falls within the category of a piece unskilfully dilated beyond the demand of the subject and the patience of the reader, and abounds with false sentimentality, as it does (in the earlier portion) with beauties peculiarly Tennysonian. At the same time, in the second couplet, the sense is to my unassisted apprehension absolutely unintelligible. Perhaps, if Tennyson had been begged to explain, he would have said, as Browning said under similar circumstances, that he knew what he meant when he wrote the lines, but had forgotten.

The "airy fairy Lilian" of the Poems is said to have been Tennyson's earliest flame. She married a clergyman, and the future peer visited at the house. He (the husband) had a laboratory or workshop in the garden, and they tell us that her old lover sat there with her, and that there he composed parts of "In Memoriam." This tale is not very credible, at least in the latter part, although, as the poem was written in detached portions at intervals, the rough draft of a stanza or a section might have been set down anywhere ; and it is not difficult for a person conversant with the art of literary composition to detect vestiges of this piecemeal structure in occasional failures of sequence and occasional tendencies to repetition.

The rather mysterious, bitter, and tiresome copy of verses on "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" have a curious light cast on them by a letter written to Colquhoun from Cheltenham in 1848, in which the poet informs him that he had been spending three months' under the roof of Sir Vere de Vere. Did Sir Vere's guest meet

with a rebuff at the hands of a daughter of the house, that he fulminated this mediocre diatribe on the lady? The improprieties of diction and the bathos in sentiment are not absent. The last lines of the first and penultimate stanzas are only two examples. The descendant of "a hundred earls" (was there ever such a person?) should not be made to behave like country Madge; but she was apparently what a prose author would have described as the daughter of Sir Vere de Vere.

Tennyson was unquestionably a man of real and exalted genius, with almost unsurpassed subtlety of thought and metaphysical perception. The superb ideas and images interspersed, more particularly in the lyrics of the middle period, inspire a generous, but vain desire of emulation. One admires and despairs. But he seems to have been almost maternally sensitive and jealous in the preservation of the *littera scripta*, and he has accordingly left behind him a flower-garden choked with weeds and tares, a "Hesperides" as miscellaneous and unequal as that of Herrick—happily a little more chaste. The world would have conferred as high a rank upon him, had he limited or reduced himself to what would have fallen within the compass of a single volume. Early success and applause spoiled him, and he refused to profit by the dissentient voice of a wise and kind minority, calling attention in no measured terms to his faults and foibles. He was not in the unhappy and untrue position of those men, some of them still our contemporaries, whom the adulation of friends and the support of the press have combined to ruin. Not a syllable was to be parted with; every scrap must be crowded in. Even lines originally written to commemorate the New Year 1862-63 were made to do duty in the next edition of "In Memoriam" as a supplementary tribute to the very much over-assessed modern Arthur—the lay-figure, who served Tennyson much as Edward King had served Milton, except that the author of "Lycidas" did not detain his sitter so long. The heroes of elegiac verse are ever *beaux idéals*. Milton made a stalking horse of a young man, who had accomplished nothing but a copy or two of indifferent academical verses, and Tennyson elevated in a similar manner into a demigod a gentleman whose best title to remembrance seems to be that he was the son of Henry Hallam. The poet probably had under his eyes an anonymous volume of Elegiac Poems privately printed seven years before, and offering truly remarkable points of similarity.

In Keats Shelley was so far more fortunate; but his poem, again, offends against the law of proportion and propriety laid down by Horace, who was not guiltless, by the way, of setting aside his own precepts. For Shelley's superstructure is far too weighty for his base, or in other words the object of his panegyric and lament is overwhelmed and lost under an avalanche of laboured and fantastic adulation. Milton has a few excellent lines in his production, but the whole is fatally affected by the lame and undramatic conclusion, which amounts to a ludicrous anticlimax.

The two dedicatory inscriptions to the Queen and the Prince Consort almost enter into the present category. The first is fit, eloquent, graceful. The second is forced, fulsome, unbecoming, ridiculous. But, then, the former is open to the probable objection of plagiarism, as the germ is in a poem of 1842, printed in *Tait's Magazine*.

What I presume to disapprove in Tennyson are want of proportion, judgment, and self-restraint. He is just the opposite to Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespear, who do not perpetually thrust their personality before us, and who therefore have augmented it. It is a strange and a disappointing, almost saddening, spectacle to view such prodigal opulence of language, such musical cadence, such rare insight, such felicity of phrase, on the one hand: and on the other, not merely passages disfigured by all sorts of crudities, but entire poems unworthy of a writer even of moderate pretensions. The bold, broad touches of a master are allowable both in poetry and painting; but here we have to recognize a cynical indifference to opinion or a parent's blindness to the deformities of his offspring. Who but such an one—such a ruined child of the Muses and the public could have written such rubbish as is quoted by Philip Smith as a motto to his "Ancient History"—

"Yet I doubt not through the ages one increasing purpose runs,  
And the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns!!!"

I apprehend that Messrs. Bavius and Maeuius would have found it difficult to surpass this egregious couplet. It is pitiable, one may be allowed to repeat, that the poet should not have passed his pen in 1878, while it could be done, through hundreds of such

passages. It is evident that, if friends, as we have heard, recommended a course of this kind, they too often did so unsuccessfully.

Nevertheless, after all deductions that can be made—allowing for much that is at second-hand and much that is not far from worthless—what a treasure we have here, how much to captivate the imagination and engage the heart! Open where one will the volume which one holds in one's hands, one may almost with certainty count on being brought face to face with some thought, picture, or image which has delighted us a hundred times, and which will delight us, one hopes, as many times again. It is a surfeiting banquet of dainties, at which the whole world is a guest. The author has converted the coinage of his brain into an indestructible freehold, a perpetual fief. What was once his alone is not more his than ours. The bees we rob of their honey: his he brings to us and casts it into our lap.

To the majority of the public Tennyson, unlike those who distinguish themselves above their contemporaries in Parliament, on the sea, on the battlefield, nay, even in the press and in the lecture-room, was little more than an intellectual abstraction and a name, just as his survivor, Mr. Swinburne, is to-day. The latter is conventionally *incognito*. But he possesses in a higher degree the true property of the *vates* in a less keen eye to the financial side—to the practical aspect of his divine calling. Tennyson, on the contrary, was a man of business and of the world—something of his own Northern Farmer—a duality, as we find that Shakespear was. The shrewd hunger for gold held him firmly; his brain was a mint of drachmas; and therein lay for the noble poet much of its value. He was no believer in the disinterestedness of genius. Tennyson in his personal character reminds us of Bulwer-Lytton. We remark in both the incongruity between the man and the writer. The poetical flights in the late laureate were artificial, not spontaneous emanations from his nature. They were the fruits of laborious and rich mental incubation and development, and contradicted the author's individuality, which was comparatively insignificant, though not so completely so as Bulwer-Lytton's.

To generations to come, less acquainted with his mixed personality and the distance in some ways between the Man and the Poet, Tennyson may and will be a more unqualified hero. Even

to ourselves, who stood at his side, he was, as a painter of natural beauties and objects, hardly surpassable ; but we were too close to him, we saw too much of his daily life and speech, to put faith in him as an exponent of heroic and sublime emotions. It seemed or seems to us mere theatrical declamation, not the direct echo of a chivalrous mind.

## X

### MISTER JOSEPH MILLER

THE name which stands at the head of the present short paper recalls an honest, grave, respectable, taciturn English comedian, in hat and wig of the period: a performer who trod the boards of Drury heavily, in Colley Cibber's day, with a proper sense of the sobrieties and gravities of broad comic life.

The want of family papers is one to be lamented in the conduct of many biographical inquiries of the highest moment, and perhaps no more striking instance could be found of the loss posterity has suffered under this head than the case of the late Mr. Joseph Miller. The materials for his biography are so distressingly slight, that Miller lives for us only in a few straggling and insulated facts. We know nearly as little of him as Mr. Steevens knew of William Shakespear, of Stratford-on-Avon. We have plays by Mr. Shakespear, while by Mr. Miller we have but playbills. There are men notorious for never having made a joke themselves, nor seen the point of another man's joke, in their lives. Mr. Miller's celebrity sprang from this cause. A man of social habits, fond of company, of tobacco, and of good cheer, nevertheless he seldom spoke, and never laughed. His literary abilities pointed to zero; for he could neither read nor write, and he learned the parts with which he adorned the stage orally, his wife proving herself the better half by reading them to him. Yet he held a good place among such sterling theatrical geniuses of the pre-Garrick school as Barton Booth, Wilkes, Dogget, Cibber, Norris, Penkethman, Spiller, and others, immortalised in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, and while Sir Richard Steele was one of the royal patentees. He filled with applause the parts of Clodpole in the "Amorous Widow," and Ben in "Love for Love." In the "King and the Miller of Mansfield," the miller was appropriately performed by Mr. Miller. But his supreme effort was Trim in Steele's "Funeral; or, Grief à la Mode."

In the year 1738, and in the month of August, Mr. Miller died,

leaving a widow. The question was, what was to become of her? Such questions will arise when tangible estate dies with the owner. But one should have added, that Miller, *plus* the widow, died seised of something else, something, as it happily turned out, more negociable, to wit—a name.

This was an epoch when the public had a sweet tooth for dead players' jokes. Consequently, dead players' jokes were the only articles of this special description worth paper and print; singular as it may appear, no man, unless perchance he was a dead player, joked in those days. If we might take certain title-pages upon trust, these dead players were a marvellously mercurial race, making, during their whole lives' time, hoards of the primest fun, and not letting a soul have the faintest inkling of it until they were fairly under ground. Of these jest-books none was so popular as "Spiller's Jests," and "Penkethman's Jests."

What was mortal of Mr. Miller had been placed under a stone in St. Clement's Churchyard, Portugal Street. I proceed with the story of his less perishable part—his Name.

There was then established in Dogwell Court, Whitefriars, a bookseller and stationer, named Read; a person of a shrewd and speculative turn of mind. Mr. Read was a pushing man, most valuable to literary gentlefolks-errant who were in want of occasional jobs, or in possession, by some rare piece of good fortune, of an idea calculated to put small sums of money into their own pockets, and large sums into Mr. Read's.

Whether Mr. Read himself originated the notion that there was a good deal in Mr. Miller's name *quasi* Dead Player, and spake on the subject to a gentleman whom he believed able to assist him; or whether it was the gentleman who took the bold initiative, is not now ascertainable. At any rate, enter Mr. Mottley. Mr. Mottley had seen better days, and was just then seeing very bad ones. It had lately gone worse and worse with him.

Mr. John Mottley—this was no *nom de plume*—was only son and heir of John Mottley, lieutenant-colonel in the service of His Sacred Majesty King James II., and afterward commandant of a regiment in that of the Most Christian monarch, Louis XIV., recommended for the post by His Sacred Majesty King James, who had retired from business to St. Germain's, and referred persons, applying for situations elsewhere. The colonel was unlucky enough to be killed in 1706 at the battle of Turin. He had known

many masters, and among them the Czar Peter of Russia, of whom, as well as of Catherine I., we have a biography from the pen of his son.

Young Mottley does not seem, at any period of his life, to have lain under particularly weighty obligations to his father, the favourite of at least two kings. His mother was no Jacobite, and from the mother's friends, the Guises and Lord Howe, he derived whatever means of support he ever had, independently of literature. His father was a spendthrift, and he did not very much care whether it was his own money he squandered, or somebody else's. His mother, a Guise by birth, had a fortune of her own, and her father at his death left her son, Mr. Read's casual acquaintance, a second. The colonel all but dissipated the one, and Mrs. Mottley's debts swallowed up the other. Still young John had friends, who kept him alive and tolerably well for several years on two splendid promises and one small place in the Excise.

In 1720, Mr. Mottley had resigned his emoluments in the Excise, on being appointed by Sir Robert Walpole an officer in the Exchequer. He thought he had found smooth water at last. But even when Mr. Mottley had become entitled to draw no more than three days' pay, came the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole's compliments to him, and was exceedingly sorry he should only just have recollected that the place was bespoken for Mr. Somebody Else! It did not occur to the right honourable gentleman that his honour was in any way concerned in providing other employment for Mottley. Do not some of us recollect how a later right honourable comedian—Lord Palmerston—played a somewhat similar trick on the poet Close?

We so far await the means of writing the biography in our hands between 1720 and 1729; similar *lacunæ* occur in the records of other men's careers; but it is to be divined that Mottley found some *moyen de parvenir*, and that he on reflection forgave Walpole, for in 1729 he figures as the writer of a copy of verses addressed to that statesman on the appointment of a Regency. From 1734 to 1744 he earned more or less from casual literary commissions, including a "Survey of London and Westminster," which he thought fit, or was advised, to put forward as the work of Robert Seymour; and he wrote plays, which were not unsuccessful. Of four or so he was the unassisted author, and he was concerned in others. He sold his talents to the booksellers trade-price; much that he



did is as the lost labours of Menander or Chrysippus. He became acquainted with strange associates. His was soon among the familiar faces at the coffee-houses and other places of entertainment resorted to by the wits and the *litterati* of all grades.

It seemed as if he was to be haunted by that bad genius of his, ill-luck, to his life's end. He had no sooner got into a fair connection with the theatres, than the gout took the use of his right hand away, and thenceforth he was a confirmed valetudinarian. He was in this predicament, crippled and half bedridden, when one day, in 1739, quite early, Mr. Read, of Dogwell Court, called on him touching a little literary business. It was thought that it would be a profitable test to gather together all the good things about town, put them into a shilling book, and make the late Joe Miller—the old *London Magazine* signalized him as “Mr. Joseph Miller, a celebrated comedian”—its foster-father. Mottley would have been a name of names for the title-page, one would have fancied; but Mr. Read held differently. Mottley was not a dead player, and Miller was, and the generous editor even sank his own personality, as we are going to see, that there might be no mistake. People, who knew anything, knew that the late Mr. Miller was one of the dullest dogs that ever sipped ale out of a black-jack; and when they saw with their own bodily eyes “Joe Miller's Jests” on every stall, what a merry sensation there would be in all the old actor's old haunts about Drury Lane, and what a stir among the mighty butchers of Clare Market, who would spare a shilling, every butcher of them, to see what it *could* all mean.

Anyhow, it was, under the truly exceptional circumstances, a bouncing shilling's worth, albeit the excellent typographer had known what it was to give a good deal more for the money—nay, about half as much for a penny—and that the “Tragedy of the Lady Jane Grey,” too. But let this pass. Mr. Read, no doubt, cleared a very handsome profit out of his solid, uncircumcised twelvepence—and let us hope that he did not forget the widow. Let us draw the curtain:—

“Joe Miller's *Jests*; or, The Wit's *Vade-Mecum*. Being a Collection of the Most Brilliant Jests; the Politest Repartees; the most Elegant Bon-Mots, and most pleasant short Stories in the *English* Language. First carefully collected in the Company, and many of them transcribed from the Mouth of the Facetious

GENTLEMAN whose Name they bear ; and now set forth and published by his lamentable friend and former companion, *Elijah Jenkins, Esq.* Most Humbly Inscribed to those CHOICE SPIRITS of the AGE, Captain Bodens, Mr. Alexander Pope, Mr. Professor Lacy, Mr. Orator Henley, and Job Baker, the Kettle-Drummer. London : Printed and Sold by T. Read, in *Dogwell Court, White Fryars, Fleet Street.* MDCCXXXIX. (Price One Shilling.)”

So there was laughter all round in the Jubilee Year 1739, when “Joe Miller’s Jests” came from Mr. T. Read’s Printing and Publishing Office. The public laughed, as those laugh who love good jokes, brimming measure ; and Mr. T. Read laughed, as those laugh who win. For, in the soberest seriousness, I take it that he went shares with Mottley and the widow much in the same manner as the lion in the fable goes shares with the ass.

The jokes about town in that immediate period embraced an extraordinarily wide range, and the pseudo-Jenkins collection abounds in illustrations of those minuter traits of character, which lend us, coming afterward, such an insight into the men and the time. Here we are presented with the choicest memorabilia possible concerning King Charles II., of ever-worshipful remembrance ; Mr. Gun Jones ; Sir Richard Steele ; the Duchess of Portsmouth ; a Country Clergyman ; Mrs. C——m ; Sir William Davenant ; Ben Jonson ; two Free-thinking Authors ; A Very Modest Young Gentleman of the County of Tipperary ; Lord R. ; Tom Burnet ; Henry IV. of France ; the Emperor Tiberius, and others too numerous to rehearse.

But—and this has been hitherto a secret among these gems of wit and humour—there crept in, unawares, two items which breathe an abnormally Christian and reflective spirit, and which we learn, from sources inaccessible to the editor of 1739, were Mr. Miller’s own composition. We must go to the works of some men, if we wish to understand their true dispositions and temperaments. Let us, for this purpose, go to the works of Mr. Miller—luminous, though not voluminous.

“Joe Miller, sitting one day in the window of the Sun Tavern, in Clare Street, a fishwoman and her maid passing by, the woman said, ‘Buy my soles, buy my maids!’ ‘Ah, you wicked old creature!’ said honest Joe. ‘What! Are you not content to sell your own soul, but you would sell your maid’s too?’”

This concludes the Moral Works of Mr. Miller. The philo-

sophical works now commence, and into these the sentimental element has manifestly been infused.

"It is certainly the most transcendent pleasure to be agreeably surprised with the confession of love from an adored mistress. A young gentleman, after a very great misfortune, came to his mistress, and told her he was reduced even to the want of five guineas. To which she replied, 'I am glad of it, with all my heart.' 'Are you so, madam?' adds he, suspecting her constancy; 'pray, why so?' 'Because,' said she, 'I can furnish you with five thousand!'"

This ends the Philosophical and Sentimental Works of Mr. Miller, heretofore (in common with the former) undiscerningly printed with all the editions of the book vulgarly denominated "Joe Miller's Jests."

As to Mr. Mottley, the reduced gentleman and disappointed candidate for Government patronage, the gout let him live long enough to see many and many an impression of "Joe Miller's Jests" pass from the bookseller's counter to the always-rightly-appreciating public. He kept alive (principally between blankets) till the year of "Joe Miller's Jests"—of the Millerian Hegira—eleven. In 1750, death compassionately beckoned him away. The hand of the harvestman was quickly cold, and almost as quickly his name sank out of recollection. Even the generation of which he was one forgot him perhaps, notwithstanding the place accorded to him in some of the dictionaries of the time, and among the memoirs which supplement Winchope's tragedy of "Scanderbeg"; and his present and future claim to notice rests upon his intimate identification with one of the most permanently popular Names in the English language.

## XI

### ITALY AND ENGLAND FORMERLY

It is a curious, though by no means an isolated, example of Shakespear's disregard of the unities that, in "Richard II.," he makes the sentiments which prevailed in his own day respecting Italy and the Italians, applicable to the reign and times of Richard. This transplantation of the manners and tone of one age to another age demands a master's hand; but the truth is that Shakespear and his fellows used no art to disguise an impropriety which they did not appreciate.

It strikes us as a grave anachronism, when we see a dramatist give a library, including Elizabethan literature, to a "person of the play," who died fifty years before the invention of printing; and this is done in 1600 in "The Life and Death of Sir John Oldcastle," and Shakespear himself similarly sins, where he makes Jack Cade charge Lord Say in "Henry VI." with the introduction of typography and a paper-mill. In an analogous way, Tintoretto, in his "Marriage at Cana," and Tiepolo, in the fresco of "Antony and Cleopatra at the Banquet," introduce the Venetian architecture and other accessories of their own age. These incongruities are numberless, simply because they were unrecognised. In a second and earlier fresco by Paolo Veronese, which seems to be known as "Apollo and Venus," there is no refinement or delicacy proper to the subject. You see merely a naked Venetian fisherman or gondolier, his wife and their child, posed for the occasion. It is much the same with his "Olympus." In most of the "Books of Hours" and other illustrated rituals we are often left to judge the date of the MS. from the costume given to the figures, which is invariably that of the period of composition. I have before me one, for instance, in which Goliath is represented in the chain armour of the thirteenth century, and a second, where a queen of France has lent her features to impersonate the Virgin. The writers on costume know what a rich source of profit in this direction this treatment has been. Every gallery in Europe

exhibits illustrations of its rise, growth, and popularity. The greatest artists employed without scruple of offence local types, costume, and scenery in the manipulation of ideal studies; and the early dramatist of the Oldcastle story pursued a similar course.

It was the same with numismatic monuments. In a gold Savoyard coin of the seventeenth century the queen on one side and the Virgin on the other wear the same head-gear.

Our Elizabethan ancestors were vehemently upbraided for their servile and even *apish* cultivation of Italian fashions and foreign effeminacies. Italy was our great forestaller.

The most ancient intercourse between these Islands and the Italian peninsula, which is largely elucidated by the vast assemblage of original documents (the prodigious Sanuto Diaries inclusive) at the Frari, was not of a mutually gratifying description. The strangers, who were Romans in those days, besides speaking a language which our British forefathers did not understand, and consequently did not value very highly, brought with them some special ideas, of which the advantage seemed to be mostly on one side.

From the time at which the Roman conquerors left Britain for good, to the next glimpse of history which we obtain, it is a wide jump; and many changes (for the better necessarily) had taken place on our side of the Channel meanwhile. But not till the Saxon power was waxing faint, and the Normans were on the eve of descending upon our shores, do we discern a trace of Italy in England. Florence laid, to the best of our knowledge, the first stone of what was to become, and to remain for centuries, a strong and flourishing edifice.

The Gherardini of Florence, who yet hold their place among the Italian aristocracy, supplied, so far back as the reign of the Confessor, the creator of the noble and long line of Fitzgerald. Otto Degli Gherardini, or "Dominus Otto," came over to this country in or about 1057, and acquired for transmission to his heir thirty-four lordships in eight English counties. In 1078, Walter Fitz Otto, his son, was Castellan of Windsor and Warden of all the forest land adjacent. He seems to have added to the wealth and influence enjoyed by Dominus Otto, and he took to wife a Welsh lady, Gladws, whose name sounds more musical to modern ears than the Prince her father's.

The dealings between Italy and ourselves in ancient times

were chiefly, as may be supposed, maritime and commercial. But nearer to us than the Italians lay the French; and France, though not so essentially a mercantile country as Italy, had opened up a regular trade with England, long before the Lombards began to frequent our harbours and seaports. The Venetians, if not the Genoese, had established emporia in parts of France as early as the tenth century, and the probability seems to be that, until their relations with us became systematic and immediate, France was the source from which we received what the Italian traders had to offer us in the way of produce and manufacture.

We learn that English travellers to Italy, even so late as the reign of Henry VII. (1485-1509), proceeded by Boulogne, St. Denis, and Paris: thence to Lyons by stages, and so into Italy, and through the dukedom, of Milan to Rome, if Rome happened to be the destination.

The Genoese transports and galleys were largely employed by our Plantagenet kings as vehicles of conveyance from point to point within their dominions, and in the accounts of royal expenditure the items under this head are of frequent occurrence and serious amount. The Genoese, Florentines, and Venetians found us excellent customers for every species of commodity.

There is a warrant, for instance, by Henry VI., in the 26th year of his reign, for the payment of various moneys, value received; and this is an average specimen: "Also we will and charge you [the treasurer of the Exchequer] that of the above sums of money, ye do pay unto Perceval Merchezano, merchant of Genoa, £12 13s. 4d. for 19 yards of purple damask, price the yard 13s. 4d., on our behalf, bought of him by the reverend father in God our right trusty and well-beloved, Adam, Bishop of Chichester." A curious illustration of manners for the year of grace 1447! But indeed every class of persons seems to have made it their business to bring acceptable articles under the notice of royal and noble individuals. In the Privy Purse expenses of Elizabeth of York, under 1502, there is an entry of forty-five shillings as paid to Friar Hercules for a pound and a half of Venice gold at thirty shillings per pound.

During the reigns of Henry V. and Henry VI., the Italians enjoyed great favour; but we must not forget that they were called upon to pay a pretty exorbitant price for the advantages which they asked and had. The English Government probably considered that there was no such great harm in levying toll upon

these foreigners, since they came to our shores for the sole purpose of making what they could out of us, by buying and bartering, fetching and carrying, and being within easy call, whenever a little money happened to be needed in a hurry. Sometimes, notwithstanding, these fellows proved useful in other ways, and could turn their hand to a real bit of hard and ticklish work. The Duke of Bedford was helped in 1416 by the Genoese to blockade Harfleur.

Long before that, however, the French and Scottish wars of Edward III. had been mainly supported by the Italians resident in London who, from time to time, advanced the King the sums which he required for his extraordinary disbursements, and for which he was reluctant to apply to Parliament. This money was, of course, lent on the security of royal letters, guaranteeing its restitution; but scarcely any of it found its way back to the coffers of the deluded and impoverished foreigners. To the Florentine Company alone Edward became a debtor, to the extent of upward of £50,000, and after many fruitless efforts to obtain redress the association was reduced to bankruptcy and the verge of pauperism. The English kings from Edward I. also obliged with their attentions the merchants of Lucca and Sienna. These financial transactions were naturally productive of trouble and friction, as new loans could not be negotiated at least without payments on account of the former advances, and the Crown was consequently laid under the necessity of approaching Parliament for aids, or taxing the people on its own initiative as a means of defraying the cost of those foolish wars.

A sufficiently remarkable document was drawn up by a countryman of our own, whose name does not transpire, in 1449, having for its more immediate object the demonstration of the best method of preserving and securing the English possessions in Normandy and France. I must extract one paragraph from this paper, where the anonymous writer alludes to the Italians, and institutes what almost reads like a disparaging comparison between his own country and the Italian States:—

“Likewise,” he observes, as a sequel to what has preceded, “we must not be weary of emulating other nations in good arts. We know well enough what outlay the Venetians, the Genoese, the Milanese, and other peoples not comparable to the kingdom of England, support year by year, in order that they may be in

a position to protect themselves by force of arms, and may not retrograde through their luxurious indulgences."

In the first year of Richard III. (1483), an Act passed directing "in what sort Italian merchants may sell merchandizes," and comprehending in its provisions "several restraints of aliens." The substance of this statute was that these aliens brought cloth and other articles to this country, and sold them not only in gross, as wholesale dealers, but in retail also, and so excluded and injured native merchants; and again, that their mode of business was not "good for trade" (in our phrase), seeing that they did not lay out the money they made in the country, but took it away with them, "all to their great profit," as the Act rehearses. They had contrived various other ways of playing into each others' hands, and made altogether too good a thing of it, perhaps, to be pleasant to the law-givers and shopkeepers of four hundred years ago.

The queen, of Henry VII. had a Genoese physician attendant upon her, on the strength of a belief, no doubt, in his superior skill and experience, as even so late as Elizabeth's time the standard of medical knowledge in England was exceedingly low. The Portuguese ambassador to England, in 1501, writing to his sovereign, repeats what he had heard from an apothecary, whose informant was this same "fisico Genoes," to the effect that Her Majesty was supposed (erroneously) to be in an interesting situation. This was rather a roundabout mode of learning the fact, if it had been one.

An Italian of wealth and rank paid a visit to this country in the reign of Henry VII., and wrote down his impressions of England and the English, as they were in the year 1500. He saw London itself and several of the principal county towns, including Oxford, and he also found his way over the border, and has told us what he thought of the Scots.

I cannot follow the narrator through his not uninteresting account of what he observed, and his conclusions upon various matters; nor can I subscribe quite implicitly to all his opinions and statements, as, for example, where he advances the rather too unqualified assertion that Wales had recovered her independence in consequence of Henry VII. being a Welshman.

An educated and intelligent Spaniard, who visited Scotland in the last years of the fifteenth century, speaking of the accom-



plishments of James IV. as a linguist, observes :—"The King speaks besides the language of the savages, who live in some parts of Scotland and on the Islands. It is as different from Scottish as Biscayan is from Castilian." These savages spoke the Celtic. We call them the Highlanders and Islanders.

The gentleman of whom we spoke before likewise wishes us to believe that ladies of distinction (*dame di onóre*) were in the habit of going to the tavern, and drinking publicly, when "they meant to drink a good deal," and that "there is no small inn-keeper, however poor and humble he may be, who does not serve his table with silver dishes and drinking cups." But we cordially go with him, when he speaks of the antipathy of the English to foreigners. He makes, as may be very well supposed, strange havoc of our customs, institutions, and names; but he was very powerfully and on the whole favourably impressed by the aspect of the country and government. Nor does he forget to repeat what he had heard from some one about the "unicorns' horns of unusual size," which they kept in some of the monasteries!

But it was not in commerce and war only, that we and Italians trafficked together in olden time. There was a third and a higher relationship, in which the obligation was more one-sided. Italy, the cradle of learning, and nursery of the polite and liberal arts, attracted to it, from the earliest period of which we possess any trustworthy record, the most refined and cultivated spirits from every corner of Europe. England cannot perhaps be said to have been in a very great hurry to reap the beneficial fruits which the regeneration of letters and of the ancient philosophy promised to yield to the world; but here was a vast social revolution impending, of which the seeds had been sown by the Gothic invaders and occupiers of Europe in an era of universal darkness; and its onward progress defied human control; and it was to be, whether Englishmen chose or not, that, from the age of Chaucer to the age of Shakespear, this civilizing and elevating influence, of which the foundations were Gothic, should communicate itself to our literature, our language, our manners, and our tastes.

Englishmen in Italy were, till a comparatively recent date, infinitely rarer than Italians in England. We used not to be so exclusively and emphatically a commercial people as we have since become, and we had not the same temptations or inducements that we have now to visit the Continent. Probably, even

in the days of Horace Walpole, no Englishman thought of setting out for Rome or Venice, in the absence of some practical motive, or unless he was a person of distinction and wealth. At the same time the present writer has elsewhere plentifully shown, to what large and constant an extent that grand Adriatic centre received in the course of centuries men and women of British nationality, and became the occasional scene of some dark and sad episode.

It is an honourable trait in the character of John Tiptoft, the accomplished Earl of Worcester, who was the first to present to his countrymen the "Commentaries" of Cæsar and the "De Amicitia" of Cicero in English clothing, that for some time he occupied a professor's chair in the university of Padua. It was long after his time that an Earl of Arundel and Surrey went to reside in Italy for the sake of educating his two sons at that famous and favourite seminary of learning, and that his wife became involved by accident in the Spanish conspiracy of 1618.

The biographers of Chaucer appear to have agreed that that great man, when he went to Italy in 1372 "on business," sought out "the learned clerk, Francis Petrarch," from whose own lips he had the tale of "Griselda." Now, Petrarch and the author of the "Decameron" were constantly visiting each other, and on most intimate terms; and suppose that Giovanni Boccaccio happened to have come over to Arqua just at that very time! What a meeting!

It is a pity that the episode was not recommended to the author of "Dialogues of the Dead" or to Mr. Landor. Something might have been made of it; but for my own part I confess that I would rather, if possible, have been present in person, to judge for myself how the interview went off, and what kind of talk passed.

Is it not singular, that Petrarch and Chaucer, two names now almost exclusively associated with letters, should in their own day have been so with public transactions? And in the case of Dante it was almost the same. Nay, do we not know, that, whatever else Dürer, Titian, and Rubens may have been, they were at least excellent men of business, and were equally prepared to go on an errand for some prince, or to execute commissions for some friend?

## XII

### SOME DEEPER USES OF POPULAR LITERATURE

BISHOP PERCY was one of the first who sought to instil an appetite and taste for something higher and better than the ephemeral and fugitive growths of the immediate time, for something, at any rate, beyond, if not above, the books damp and warm from the press ; and his is a memory, therefore, which deserves to be respected apart from any exception which may be taken to the man as a literary worker.

If there is a fault in our present literary tastes it is that they are too *current*. We are too grossly addicted to the books of the hour. We keep railway time in our reading. If we shut a little steam off occasionally, and allow ourselves to pause at a great author, we hurry on so much the faster afterward to make up for lost minutes. Writers have to make it part of their business to study the digestive question. They find it to be of no use to send in encyclopædias, metaphysics in quarto, or any other heavy goods on approbation, for these are incapable of being swallowed whole. There is no chance for the good old solid ware our dear ancestors so loved, raw and uncoloured. In our existing state of mind we would rather take medicine, of the two, than read about it. If any gentleman has a work on the subject he cannot do better than make it up into light effervescing draughts, and call it Doctor Dewdrop's Table Talk. Science is a worse bore still ; but it may be taken in a state of gossip solution. History is a new name for Bogy. We have not stomachs strong enough to keep it. Englishmen's constitutions were formerly different, no doubt. History was all very well for three-bottle men. Light nourishment agrees with us best now. We dislike the feeling of oppression. Children of all growths among us know the doctors that are kind to us and the doctors that are cross. We hate Dr. Hume and Dr. Robertson and Dr. Lingard, who want to make us ill with their big draughts and heavy food ; but we love Dr. John Timbs, and Dr. Harrison Ainsworth, and Dr. James Grant, and

Dr. Walter Scott, and Dr. Fenimore Cooper, and the author of "Elegant Extracts," who tell us all that we want to learn about everybody so nicely and so good-naturedly

Still there are a few persons who hanker after the old thing, who like to see Dryden and Swift presenting themselves for admission at least in gentlemanly octavo, and who give the go-by to this modern spoon-meat for the brain, this mental puff-paste, these cheap selections from voluminous and obscure authors, with no little scorn. They turn the tables upon us, and can see nothing in what is new, unless it should chance to be some antiquity renascent, which gets, perhaps, after all but a grudging welcome. To a true-blue archæologist a Caxton in modern black is not half so like the original as Mr. Kean's "Richard Crookback" or Madame Tussaud's "Richelieu." Your modern antiques are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl.

At least, let us look behind us at moderate intervals, and not forget too easily or too lightly the ground which we have passed, the scenes which our fathers' fathers and their fathers knew by heart like an every-day lesson, and which, that we might know them, they have left painted immortally, not on canvas, but in books, which to them were what our books are to us—living literature. Let us think that there is more than the England we live in to-day to be held dear; an England spread out before us, darkly, yet hopefully, and an England lying behind us, farther than eye can scan; and let us look back upon ourselves—more especially we who may be loving too well the learning which grows to our hands. Travellers do not see every object on the road. One sees one thing and another another. In the England which lies behind us there is work for many gleaners. There is much corn yet among the stubble. The honey remains in some forgotten combs.

The workers that we have in the midst of us, not leaving out those whose memory dates from yesterday, have been lax, it may be, in gathering for their fellows the volume of lessons which the past would so abundantly yield. Have we not crossed over into the twentieth century, and are we not told that the history of the country has in main part to be written? The history, not of its kings' reigns only, its triumphs, its glories, its material progress, but the history of its arts and literature, its learning and refinement, its luxuries and recreations, all reflecting one another,

and all helped on by one another: these latter a hundred-fold more important than all the kings who have ever sat upon thrones, and all the governments, which have taken their turns in mis-managing our affairs.

The author of a new History of England constructed upon new principles out of fresh material would have a literally Titanic labour to perform. His chronicle of the march of events from year to year, and from decade to decade, would not be the most onerous or perplexing portion of it. To accomplish his task satisfactorily and completely he would have to undergo immense and thankless drudgery. He would of necessity be required to join in spirit and feeling the era, which he was immediately describing, and to mix in its society, with all the adventitious aids of progressive culture and information. He should be a contemporary with all the added strength of an aftercomer. He would have to illustrate the civilisation of this great country in all its departments. He would have to exercise in the discharge of that duty rare delicacy of insight and rare soundness of judging. For one grain of true stuff which was worth accepting and laying by against the time for its use, he would meet with a vast deal that was mere husk. It would fall within his province to describe with fidelity, yet with picturesqueness, the condition of English society at successive epochs, the changes which that society has suffered, and the agencies by which such changes have been wrought. Unless he happened, by an exceedingly uncommon piece of good fortune, to combine a degree of judicial impartiality and precision and somewhat of the touch and spirit of an artist with more than ordinary scholarship and more than ordinary acumen, he would probably leave much undone and much imperfectly done. Neither our own generation, perhaps, nor that which is to follow will behold this man, in whose mind we should want to see united such rare qualifications.

There is certainly one rich source of illustration and light, which this great artificer could not neglect without the most serious disadvantage. I am referring to the old vernacular poetry of England, and it shall be my aim to endeavour to shew what sort of clues this poetry affords, and the amount of gain which an investigator of our social progress may expect to derive from researches in so vast and wealthy a field. A few inches below the surface it is virgin earth.

The principle that history does not consist wholly, or even

chiefly, in meagre diplomatic and international details, in other words, that an historian is a good deal over and above an annalist, has by this time met with pretty cordial recognition. We should expect to find in any book aspiring to rank as a classic a full and vivid description of the manner in which the Englishmen of former times dressed, and dined, and travelled, and slept; how they cooked their food, and laid out their gardens; how they dressed and what they gave for their clothes; but we should not be pleased to see the artist lose sight of the historian, and truth sacrificed to portrait-painting. Considering the vital bearing such particulars and insights have on the subject, a real history of the English people ought to deal with the views our progenitors entertained on the education and moral training of their sons and daughters, and should admit us to a farther knowledge of their domestic habits, even, if at a slight sacrifice of conventional decorum the author should write a homily on Sir John Harington's "Metamorphosis of Ajax," of their marriage customs, of their evening amusements, of their proficiency in the sports of the field, and of the culture of music and other humanising accomplishments among men not less than among women. All such information is obtainable, no doubt, by the antiquary; we should desire it so brought together, so focussed, as to meet the needs of those who are not antiquaries. But if our available records were far more complete, and might be far more completely reduced to literary form, there are things, which we should still miss, and which can never be recovered, save in faint hints upon paper; the speaking tones of our illustrious or our beloved, their inflexions of voice, their expression, their gesture, even their grimace; and does not such a circumstance, such a misfortune, render it the more important, wherever a historian may, for him to set down, not his own words, but those of the men and women, whom he happens to be describing or mentioning, and to stand aside while they relate, so far as they can, the case.

The homely and unpolished rhymes of the minstrels of old days are apt, we conceive, to improve on more intimate acquaintance. They have rugged charms of their own. There is a subtle fascination in their simplicity and very rudeness. The uncouth diction in which many of them are clothed may be conquered almost as easily as the half-defaced inscriptions on ancient tombstones which often tell a poorer story. A ballad poem or a romantic lay

of the Plantagenet time ought to be as dear to us as a suit of armour worn at Crécy, or a canopy penny of William the Conqueror. On the other hand, the historian of the future must not neglect to estimate the influence on our moral and intellectual progress of mediæval learning and fiction, and, as far as the latter is concerned, alike of the Arthur and Robin Hood, and of the *Gesta Romanorum*, type; nor should he omit to take into account the mixed bearing on national thought of prolonged ecclesiastical prestige.

I must be understood in a strict sense, of course, when I observe that the stock of national poetry is less considerable in reality than it may at first sight appear. The translations from the French are excessively numerous, and all these, in a greater or less degree, embody French manners and French habits of thought—not what we are seeking. For the latter we can only look in the writings of the men who lived in the heart of the old English life, and earned their bread by song.

I may pass to a few indications of the claims which this section of the vernacular literature of England has upon the attention of forthcoming illustrators of our annals. To begin, what a delightful glimpse we seem to catch of an old road-side scene in that poem of the “King and the Tanner of Tamworth”—not in the piece, as we get it in Bishop Percy’s book, but in its more antique form, where for Tamworth we have Daventry. The theatre of the adventure was at the first laid, no doubt, in Warwickshire. In Percy’s “Reliques” the tale is associated with an incident in the reign of Edward IV., but it existed before Edward’s day. It may be half a century older, and the language shews that the minstrel who composed it originally was some tuneful character belonging to the provinces. The last Lord Basset of Drayton died in 1390. Edward IV. was at Daventry in 1471, and attended divine service there. The story, as we possess it, breathes the air of being a fifteenth-century *refacimento* of a more ancient *fabliau*.

There are sundry other pieces extant in our tongue, and appearing to be of home growth, in which a king of the country was a “person of the play.” They are all characteristic in their way: “The King and the Hermit,” a story of Edward II.’s time, “King Henry II. and the Miller of Mansfield,” and so on. Those who read “The King and the Hermit” will remember something which they have read before; it will bring back to them a bit of

"Ivanhoe." Royalty has seldom omitted opportunities of evincing its condescension and affability. Ordinary people stretch themselves when they feel cramped; and royalty must unbend, too, sometimes in right royal fashion, and run the risk of being bearded by creatures in its own likeness. These romantic anecdotes of the interviews of men with their rulers are part of feudal and semi-mythical history, when, if the subject got his rights, it was as often as not in this sort of casual, capricious way. The honest folks of those times could not see the other side of the picture—that if they were the king's servants, he was *pari ratione* theirs—that they were equally parties to a treaty. Adventures of this description have been favourite topics with romancists and compilers of anecdotes from the days of Alfred the Great to our own. It did not signify much, perhaps, while our political institutions were more or less on the old feudal basis, if a royal personage chose to go *incognito* in this way as an occasional diversion or otherwise; and one may remark that even the disguises employed were such as answered to the age, when the person and appearance of the ruler were unfamiliar to a large proportion of his subjects; but it is a delicate experiment at present for crowned heads to appear too freely in public out of court dress and with the regalia and other theatrical accessories laid aside. The illusion is apt to be broken. The divine grace is wanting. Even the gods of antiquity lost prestige by mingling with mortals. A man may be a man for a' that; but a prince ought to beware how he too lightly divests himself of his stage properties. The crown and the *nimbus* are made in one piece.

Several little metrical manuals of instruction were compiled by the authors ostensibly for the benefit of their children, or of the children of the whole land. They are usually addressed to one pupil in particular, as, for example, the small treatises in verse, "How the wise man taught his son," and "How the good wife taught her daughter."

The history of the first piece, shortly told, is this: An Englishman of the fifteenth century is supposed to deliver a series of maxims to his son, a boy of fifteen, for his guidance through life. He must not be a tell-tale. He must not seek any occupation to his neighbours' annoyance or injury. He must settle in one place, and not be always shifting about. He must not frequent the tavern, or gamble. He must not laugh much. He must keep



out of debt. He must take his supper early, and go to bed betimes, to preserve his complexion from surfeit. He had better have nothing to do with juries. When he marries, he must not take a wife for her money; and he must be kind to his wife, but he must not believe all her tales about the servants :—

“ If thy wife come to complain  
Of thy servants on any side,  
Be not too hasty them to chide,  
Nor anger not, ere thou know the truth;  
For women in wrath cannot abide,  
But soon they raise a smoky roof.”

He says a little farther on very aptly :—

“ Though she be servant in degree,  
In some degree she *fellow* is.”

He must treat his wife justly, and use fair words to her, for he points out to him :—

“ When thou thy own wife wilt defame,  
Well may another man do so;  
By soft and fair men make tame  
Hart and buck, and wild roe.”

There is plenty more behind, and the language and spirit throughout are as fresh as if the writer had set all this down for one who was still among us. We seem to know all that he says pretty well by heart, and there is not a line perhaps that may not offend nice critics by reason of its triteness; but we are not nice critics, and to us it is delightfully edifying, and moreover it is to be said that, if we were never to read what we had read before, it would be blind man's holiday for three quarters of every moon.

Even more apposite, and richer in illustrations and hints, is the second production, “ How the good wife taught her daughter.” Its proverbial philosophy is quite *loveable*. In this pleasing little didactic composition of three hundred and odd years ago, we stumble upon our every-day doctrine that, if you help yourself, your friends will bless you.

“ Thy thrift is thy friends' mirth, my dear child,”

says a good wife who, toward the end of her catechism, declares—

“ Better were a child unborn than untaught,”

which is a truth that might even now be much more widely recognised and worshipped than it happens to be.

The principal offences against good taste and modesty to be avoided, are swearing, haunting the tavern, wagging her head, and swinging with her shoulders, when she is out for a walk, or on her way to market, speaking uncivilly to persons who accost her properly and with no bad motives and over-dressing, "as if her husband was a king." The good wife makes one of her proverbs fit well here :

"Over-done pride maketh naked side, my dear child."

JOHN SKELTON and his disciples— if those writers who imitated with more or less success his manner and rhythm may be called so, have thrown enormous light on the period about the Reformation. Skelton's writings are better known than they used to be ; but the works of his followers, which are less familiar, are also brimming over with instruction. Take Roy's satire against Wolsey, "*Vox Populi Vox Dei*," "*A Poor Help*," and "*Doctor Double Ale*"; and this is a small selection. As we read these almost forgotten diatribes, either against religious conservatism or against the Reformers, we appear to realise in part the life of the time, to gain a kind of torchlight view of the ecclesiastical temperature, and of clerical morality in England under Henry VII. and his son.

In all periods of our history, satire, with every allowance for over-drawing and over-colouring, which must ever be parcel of the craft, has done good service, and we owe much to song-writers. Both of these have let us, without intending it, into many secrets, which otherwise time must have buried. A casual phrase in an old ballad or an old lampoon has untied many hard knots. For these fellows have made their trade out of those very things their lordships the chroniclers were pleased to consider beneath the dignity of their subject. Not even Mr. Green, in his so-called "*History of the English People*," has gone with sufficient detail into these collateral questions—if collateral they are. That gentleman does not tell us anything about our agriculture, our industries and arts, our gardens, our cookery, our domestic utensils. Veritably the title is a sorrowful misnomer.

There werè satirists always, and so there are still. They have declined from the ancient standard, in having to pay court to

decency. The minstrels died out long ago, and we have the song-writers instead of them. Not that these are all that the minstrels were, but they are perhaps sufficient. There are, to be sure, a few blind harpers yet to be seen in certain latitudes by us, with our partial indistinctness of comprehension why not being able to see should be the main point. There must have been a little in it, nevertheless, for "Blind Harper" passed centuries ago into a proverb. Of the ancient minstrelsy of Scotland, the sole remaining trace, I believe, is a daily performer on the bagpipe, the liegeman of a duke.

So long as the domestic and social annals of England continue to be unwritten, there can be no impertinence or idleness in insisting on the unemployed wealth of material for the purpose, which exists in various directions; the stores of illustration and information range in date from the era of Magna Charta downward. There is comparatively little before the Plantagenet period, for *BEOWULF* is out of the question. The author of that does not depict English scenes or English homes.

The blackguards and scoundrels, the rogues and vagabonds, the thieves and beggars, of passed times are history—inasmuch as history would not be its true self without a pretty good account of them, and yet the late Mr. Green is as silent on the point in his curiously imperfect Account of the English People as he is on our Gardening and our Cookery. There is a kind of satisfaction in being sure that these characters were as great a nuisance to our ancestors as they are to us. The "Highway to the Spital House," by Robert Copland, who, like the more illustrious Caxton, united the vocations of printer and author, professes to afford some light here. Copland lived under King Henry VIII.; he is supposed to have written this metrical picture of the state of the Hospital of St. Bartholomew, as he knew it, about the year 1520. The poem (so to speak) has slender pretensions to elegance—or, alas! to originality; for worshipful Master Robert Copland, who was an industrious translator from the French, was indebted to a piece in that language, at all events for the broad idea and plan, called *Le Chemin de l'Hopital*, printed in 1505, when he was a very little boy indeed.

The rascality of an old kingdom like ours has certainly its interesting aspects. The future historian of England will do well to study the "Highway to the Spital House" side by side with

other cognate works in prose and verse, not forgetting the statutes in such matters provided. He may be surprised to learn, if he should not be already aware of it, what a life these characters have had of it, battenning like parasites upon the rest of the world, and how some of the queer old names have stuck to their owners with very slight change.

The military impostor and the sham Jack-tar, to the recital of whose exploits by land and sea the nine worthies could not have listened without a deep sense of inferiority, had come into full leaf, when Copland wrote; and they are still in our streets, pouring into our ears the same witching tale. The expedient of knocking on the head had also been discovered at this period or before, and had been found effective, when the "noble gentleman" was too long in seeing the point, or nobody was by. Moorfields seems to have been selected by these heroes as being an airy and agreeable locality, where they could watch for prey, and seek public sympathy for their wrongs, when there was none.

The London poor appears to have consisted, ages before the Brothers Mayhew started in business, of three classes: Those who could not work, those who would not work, and those who had no work to do. Having these three eligible divisions of society to deal with, the authorities at St. Bartholomew's and other like institutions had a fairly busy part to play.

Copland, for the readier execution of his plan, feigns a dialogue between himself and the porter of St. Bartholomew's, under the portico of the house, where he seeks shelter from a shower one day, about a fortnight after Hallowmas; in this conversation he elicits from his casual acquaintance all that he desires to know of the working of the poor law, as to the class of persons who are taken in, and upon many other points connected with mendicity, roguery, and sham. It is rough writing, for Copland was no poet; but the rarity of his subject pleads for him; the "Highway to the Spital House" is the earliest picture which remains to us of the low classes in London—both of the low in pocket and the low in morals.

The uses of early English poetry as an handmaid, so to speak, to history are manifold. They are not confined to particular phases of society and manners, but embrace all. Early poetry sheds a strange and true light upon the vices and virtues, the thoughts and feelings, the tastes and differing characteristics,

of the English race in every time, commencing with the pre-historic ages, and dating down to the present.

*The romantic compositions in this language are almost numberless*; but few of them are strictly original. They have come to us for the most part from the French; but, like the Copland piece, they are often very loose paraphrases or adaptations, and keep in view little beyond the general outline, the translator re-setting the picture, and working in a new background and accessories.

But such old poetical remains of native, unmixed growth as we have, are to be regarded with peculiar reverence and tenderness, for they are invaluable monuments, which should not move us to ridicule, because they are extravagant, or excite contempt from their deficiency of refinement.

Our appreciation of Nature and of the Arts is more catholic than our appreciation of literature. The black masters are more in vogue than the black letter. A piece of Roman pavement is more thought of than the first edition of Livy. The majority of people would feel a keener curiosity to see the stylus with which Cicero wrote, or to meet with a Roman copper coin of the Emperor Otho, than to recover all the lost works of the Greek poets. Relic-hoarders and relic-worshippers are common types enough, but too many of these value what they have not as art, but *vertu*. The virtuoso is a hunter of dead game; higher aims and higher fruits are in the thoughts of the true Antiquary. The spoils which we have snatched, trophy-like, from time and generations gone by make up for him a volume finely and nobly illuminated, out of which he reads to us chapter after chapter of the unwritten history of England and Englishmen. A vocation and a purpose not to be scornfully regarded!

Foremost among the tales of fiction (all more or less grounded on actual incidents), which appear to be purely native, are the metrical legends of Arthur and his Table, a certain proportion of the Robin Hood poetry, and such pieces as the "Squire of Low Degree," and "Adam Bel, Clem of the Clough, and William of Cloudesly."

Of the Robin Hood ballad literature, to which an antecedent paper is devoted, it must be predicated that the scenes which it discloses to us are principally laid under the greenwood shade or at the forest side; and it would not yield so good an harvest

to an historian as those other two species of writing would, the domestic legend and the lay of knight-errantry. The former admits us to a knowledge of contemporary town and village life, and helps our imagination to people, as it were, the old English interiors with men and women in the old English costume, speaking a language archaic only to us, and following their daily labour as we do, but in ways to us grown strange.

The essentially English romances of chivalry have a worth and charm of their own. Their valuable allusions, their idiomatic diction, their strange conceits, and their picturesque figurativeness, rivet the attention, even where the literary merit cannot be called commanding. There is a freshness, a vivid colouring, and a share of poetical beauty, in the "Morte d'Arthur," which have recommended it to the notice and imitation of a modern illustrious writer. The old minstrel-poet, who composed for the amusement of his audience the sweet legend of "Adam Bel," contrived to awaken an interest, not dead yet, in his story of fair Alice, and "English Wood," and "Merry Carlisle."

Philologically considered, very few old texts are without their importance. It is when we come to study them in their social and moral aspects, that the line has to be drawn between what is radically English, and what is English only in outward semblance.

The establishment of a severe critical standard is peremptorily necessary, and the necessity is one to be much regretted, seeing that it forces us to exclude from consideration many pieces of rare beauty and supreme interest. If it robbed us only of the "Nutbrown Maid," one of the chastest and most elegant productions in our language, a perfect literary marvel, which we see that the Scottish schoolmaster Henryson happily imitated in his "Robene and Makyne," and Prior spoiled in his "Henry and Emma," we should have motive enough for feeling sorry; and sorry we feel, too, that we were not at Oxford in 1520, when a bookseller had it in stock at one penny—a silver one to be sure. But this inexorable principle involves the surrender of many other treasures, which we would fain keep, if we could. I think that the less said about the Merry Jests of "Dan Hugh Monk of Leicester" and the "Miller of Abingdon" the better. Misgivings as to the indigenous quality of the fascinating Thumb myth might prove to have a warrant. We must not be too sure that we have any right to take credit for the "Friar and the Boy." It is tolerably

certain that the interesting romance of "Arthur of Little Britain," translated by Lord Berners, is purely French. It is one of the later compilations, and not improbably it owed its existence to the real or supposed adventures of Arthur of Bretagne, on which it may be a fanciful superstructure.

But let Italy, France, Germany, and the East have their due, and England would still retain a fair surplus, which she might hold against all comers. Here would be plenty of unworked and fruitful ground, where ore might be had for the seeking.

Romantic literature of all kinds, when we arrive at maturer years, is apt to pall, where it is cast in times lying within the historical limit, and much more so, where it deals with scenes and characters, and manners, of the day. But we never grow too old to relish fictions transmitted to us by distant ages, and even, when they were composed, belonging to a remote past. We become less tolerant of the modern novelists, who introduce to us personages and incidents, which we feel at all events that it is in our power and right to challenge; but to the last we give the benefit of the doubt to such of our youthful acquaintances as Don Quixote and Gil Blas, Roderick Random and Humphrey Clinker, who lived so long before railways, newspapers, and the penny post.

### XIII

#### F A M E

"One must dream only of living with oneself and with one's friends, and not of establishing a second and a very chimerical existence in the minds of other men. Happiness or unhappiness is real, and reputation is only a dream."—VOLTAIRE, 1733.

"Mr. Murphy said that he remembered when there were several people alive in London, who enjoyed a considerable reputation merely from having written a paper in the *Spectator*."—BOSWELL.

"Post obitum duplici fœnore reddit Honos."

It is a favourable and even flattering evidence of the solidity of some reputations, that the owners of them seem to remain to our apprehensions, through all time, stouter realities than three-fourths of the rank and file of the world, breathing and moving round us.

We cannot feel that there was any paltry egotism or empty self-congratulation in those lines, where Horace foreshadows the immortality which we know to be his. It was merely what Epicurus and Ovid pronounced of themselves in a different form of words, and we may be sure that the same impression passed through the mind of Tacitus, when he penned that fine envoy to the life of Agricola: *Agricola, posteritati narratus et traditus, superstes erit*. Handed down to us by his biographer, Agricola survives, while many, who occupied in their time as prominent a position, and had virtues they could call their own, have not happened to be recollected, because they had no Tacitus to deliver over their graves an immortal panegyric.

Death and time rob us too often of our adventitious environments, ere our footstep and voice have died away on the ear; and some, who parted from us only a generation or so since, we have to be contented with discerning through a dim chiaroscuro medium, and with appreciating their merits or qualifications in perspective. Where we stand the throng is dense, the struggle for place and praise internecine. But the centuries behind us are thinly peopled with the slender minority, which has survived



in recollection and fancy all ordeals. Here with us living ones the battle rages, there it has been fought and won, and the victors hold the field. As to authors more especially, such gentlemen as fill their cases with books recommended to them by the trade have a vague idea of this or that kind of value or excellence; but the general public regards the most celebrated personages of passed ages as mere abstractions, as names enveloped in a mysterious radiance. A few decades hence the average man or woman will know—let me take for example—Samuel Taylor Coleridge merely as a sublime theorist, a sort of modern Socrates, at whose feet disciples gathered and of whom there are literary remains illegible or unattractive to most.

There are two classes of posthumous repute, either of which we may be pardoned for coveting in the way of speculative contemplation. To have surpassed our contemporaries in some particular path or direction, if not in more than one, is a title-deed to a conspicuous ear-mark on the roll of departed worthies. But there is a yet higher and yet purer glory, that the inextinguishable, inalienable property of a relative handful of men, who in life towered above their fellows in intellectual force and achievement, and to whose knowledge or suggestion we have little or nothing to add after centuries or tens of centuries. Think what a life everlasting, what a true eternity, we see to be the lot of Socrates and Aristotle, Cæsar, Cicero, all the great ones of modern Europe, our own Alfred, the two Bacons, Shakespear, for instance! No grave could hold them. They were their own monument. They dwell with us, walk with us, converse with us, to-day still; they move and have their being among millions of those, who breathe, yet have never lived—who belong to that large human family so dear to the late Mr. Carlyle.

Men of rank, as Sir Joshua Reynolds put it, help men of genius to live, and men of genius requite the obligation after their own fashion. It is the ancient treaty of alliance between wealth and intellect, which we may expect to see growing more and more out of use, as our institutions are more and more socialised. But so it is that Mæcenas lives in the verses of Virgil, and Bolingbroke, “all-accomplished St. John,” in the verses of Pope. How many a name, high and puissant enough upon a time, has been saved from swelling the long catalogue of Illustrious Obscure, because the holder of it is inseparably linked in our minds and memories

with another of deathless renown! Would Southampton be in our thoughts and on our lips at the present hour, if Shakespear had not conferred upon him the distinction of dedicating to his good Lordship the "first heir of his invention"? In this case, and in a few more, the "favourer of learning and ingenuity" has no right to complain that it has come at last to be the Author's lot to take a front scat. It is but *Quid pro Quo*. It is the turn of the Patron to be contented with second-rate honours, while the man of letters, perpetuated in countless impressions of his works, goes down from age to age, unconscious of antiquity, and the contemporary of all the succeeding generations that are to be. For what do we recollect Isabella D'Este, Marchioness of Mantua, if it be not that she befriended Aldus Manutius, and sat to Titian? The great lady survives, as it were, by refraction.

If it sometimes becomes curious to consider the diversity of means by which people achieve credit and fortune, it surely is not less so to look at the various sorts of reputation there are, and have been, in the world. Holy Writ teaches, that the Angels of God and the stars of the firmament are of differing glory; and so it is with human celebrity. It is the freehold of some among us to live after our deaths *by report*. The substance is lost; but the name and memory abide. Only the grosser elements dissolve. This is posthumous fame, a deferred settlement of dues, a man's value tested and stamped current, a draft upon posterity at a longer or shorter date.

Montaigne thought that Cicero, notwithstanding all his published works and all his political achievements, was mainly, if not solely, to be remembered as an orator; and is it not so with the late Mr. Gladstone? Is it not indeed so in a far greater measure? For, apart from his eloquence, has Mr. Gladstone left any monument equal to certain literary treatises of his Roman predecessor, such as those on the "Nature of the Gods," "Friendship," and "Old Age"? and assuredly as a public man he will never hold so high a rank. The voluminous estate of the Roman may be said to go against him, regarded as an author and philosopher; and it might have been better had he seen such matters with our eyes, and left a more portable legacy, like Montaigne himself. But Cicero was one of those universal intellects, which could not refrain from grasping all subjects of human concernment. In secular literature he resembled Bacon and Coleridge,

and surpassed them both, if we take into account the times and the circumstances. As the ashes are to the living body, so is the residual fame to the gross bulk of production; and while Cicero has undergone all the shrinkage and alchemical refinement of well-nigh two thousand years, and is present to us all at this hour in such noble proportions, there is slender hope for such an one as Gladstone that two thousand years hence as much as a hundredth part of him will have survived. Each age is a step-ladder to the next. The nett sum of the most fruitful life is as the gold to the quartz. If all that Socrates, all that Cicero, all that our more modern great ones, added to the volume of our clear, drossless knowledge, may be reducible into a pamphlet, what is to be said of the benefaction of littler men of every century? What they have done for us would occupy a smaller area than a homœopathic pill. But human efforts are of different gravities and densities, like the stars, and some from their inherent solidity and freedom from vapour emerge from the crucible less attenuated than others. What a reflexion it is, when one has been putting together some sort of bookish *simulacra* all one's days, that the absolute credit to the world's balance of real knowledge may be "bounded in a nutshell!"—and how much more is it so with the pure and simple *Rechauffeur*?

We all had a singular experience the other day in the enormous demand for Mr. Morley's Biography of Mr. Gladstone. It had been well-aired beforehand; the compiler was understood to be more behind the scenes than any one else; and her late Majesty had expressed her interest in the undertaking. Now, where did the interest precisely lie? As a statesman Mr. Gladstone was a failure and a fallacy of the most pronounced and disastrous stamp. As a literary man his rank is declining from day to day. What remains? The orator, the rhetorical juggler, the inexhaustible utterer of brilliant and well-balanced periods, with which he dazzled and hoodwinked his audiences on the platform and in Parliament. As a speaker it was, then, that he was so superlative, so irresistible. Yet that his gifts in this direction would unseconded have emptied the publishers' shelves of Mr. Morley's volumes so rapidly, seems to me as doubtful as that the name of Mr. Morley would have achieved such a success. But it was a work which was so timed as to allow feelings of political antagonism to soften or subside, and the public was prepared

to judge it and the man, of whom it related the story, without party bias. Thousands upon thousands of readers were found to compete impatiently, breathlessly, for the means of ascertaining, almost without the loss of a post, what account the biographer had been able to give of Gladstone and what account Gladstone had been permitted to give of himself. The Pandora's box was set open; every one became in a position to scan the whole narrative of the extraordinary career of an extraordinary individual; and in a few weeks the ferment died away. Not so the memory of Gladstone. Making the fullest deduction for all his faults and errors as a public servant, as a thinker, and as an author, we must recognize that he was altogether one of the most distinguished personalities of his century—as Mr. Balfour said of Sir John Tenniel, “a great gentleman.” As in the case of Disraeli, his command of an independent fortune favoured the development of his faculty as an orator and of his rise as a politician, and Disraeli and himself had that in common, that both were men of letters. But Gladstone, side by side with his splendid parliamentary triumphs, built up a name as a polemical controversialist, as a classical student, as an authority on Homer, as a connoisseur, and his wife potently co-operated with him. He was versatile, it is true, rather than profound—an amateur in everything save his debating power. Had he been, however, nothing more than an orator, he would not have left behind him the distinct and tangible individuality which we feel to be his. If he had been nothing more than a scholar, a theologian, or a virtuoso, his name would not have been found in the foremost rank among the followers of any of those professions. We have had his equals as speakers, and greater scholars, greater theological disputants, greater judges and collectors of antiquities, greater woodmen. In him in a conspicuous and impressive degree met certain qualifications and characteristics, which, joined with his social standing, render him the commanding and fascinating figure, which we behold in our mind's eye—shall behold to our life's end. *L'Union fait la force.*

There are many of us, undoubtedly, to whom it may be an agreeable feeling, that we shall have a sort of *locus standi* hereafter; but it must be as part of a world with which we can have no sensible contact; a world to which we shall stand in some such relation as Arthur and his Knights do to us, or the

fairies, or Robin Hood. All the value of the sensation is personal and present. Are not Shakespear and Spenser for ever with us? yet we have succeeded not to their inventions only, but also to the enjoyment of their permanent fame. Their estate in the delightful consciousness of leaving behind them works more durable than flesh and blood has passed to us, yet we are apt to regard at our good leisure the immortality of this or of that author, without being aware how long his interest in the matter has expired, or how much the name which we idolise is our own property, nay, in some sort, an emanation from ourselves.

I think I may answer for the world at large, and say that it holds rather cheaply this sort of repute, regarding with a half-suspicious eye these tumular and shadowy rites. It is certainly debatable ground. For myself I own that I go with the public a little in this. I doubt if the noble and accomplished Surrey would have surrendered an atom of the applause of his contemporaries, of the admiration of a splendid court, of the fickle favours of a prince, for the proud and lasting rank he holds among us. It is a question whether Shakespear would have parted with any of the good opinion of his fellows, in consideration of our ceaseless homage, or if the consciousness of transmitting imperishable works was capable of consoling the great poet for his own early end. I am seriously mistaken if Bacon would not have consented, had he had the free option, to discount the appreciation of all succeeding times, to have been more perfectly comprehended by his own, and to have preserved the favour of his sovereign unbroken. He would have been scarcely so ready to commend, as he did, to an unknown posterity his ethical and philosophical discoveries.

It is Samuel Daniel who exclaims :—

“ Perhaps the words thou scornest now  
 May live, the speaking picture of the Mind,  
 The extract of the Soul, that labour’st how  
 To leave the image of herself behind ;  
 Wherein Posterity, that love to know,  
 The just proportion of our spirits may find.”

But Daniel was a disappointed man, who retired to his native county to spend his declining years, full of chagrin at the limited popularity of works composed in a hard and cramped style. The value which such a writer would set on the ultimate verdict of the

public is scarcely, in consequence, an infallible criterion. He might have been less ready to place himself in our hands, if his original readers had formed and expressed a more favourable estimate of him as a Poet.

Shakespear's first experience of a dramatic career was, from all accounts, as a performer, not as a producer, of plays. Of his merits as an actor there are scanty records; as a dramatist his abilities were conspicuous by general acknowledgment. But among all those who lived in or about his own time, Davenant, Milton, and Dryden apparently stood alone in forming something like a just conception of this man's superlative genius. His contemporaries, and the age which succeeded them, had a film over their eyes, which made it next to impossible for them to see the difference which (without any special credit to us) we see at this day between Shakespear and such inferior intellects as those of Sidney and Spenser, Jonson and Fletcher. But even the author of "Paradise Lost" was barely qualified, perhaps, to take true measurement of the colossal mind which had passed away (early, yet its work done) while he was still a child, or to conjecture the distance which we, coming after, should place between the works of Shakespear and all other works.

Shakespear therefore by no means enters into the class of writers who, having enjoyed their full share of celebrity in their lifetime, may seem to have exhausted their title to the public favour. On the contrary, it is only just now (to speak comparatively) that the rank which was his due has been accurately defined and settled. His fame has come late to him. In his Sonnets written at a comparatively early period of life, he had used the Sonneteer's licence in proudly alluding to the powerful rhyme which was to make the object of his verse live in perpetuity; but whatever he may have thought, we do not find him giving expression to this sentiment in his maturer work. That he was exceptionally unfortunate in one sense is indisputable, for he had not only to wait so long for his due, but, as if it had not been enough, that his works were mangled by the printers of the time, some of the dullest creatures in the universe have set themselves in more recent days the task of illustrating his career and restoring his text.

The Earl of Surrey is, to a certain degree, another instance of the same kind. The hero and cynosure of an era of chivalrous

fervour and barbaric gallantry, he now inhabits our imaginations, a gentle ghost. We admire upon demand the graces of his person, of his character, of his style, as much as though they were all things of to-day, and sympathise with his premature fate as warmly as if he had been a man living within our remembrance, one of ourselves. This is the force of genius, the ascendancy and predominance of Spirit over Matter—the ultimate triumph of the scion of the Howards over all the rest, just as we inquire for Boyle the chemist and Boyle the astronomer more frequently than for their ducal descendants—more frequently for Richard Boyle, the great Earl of Cork, than for all the Dukes of Devonshire.

Sir Philip Sidney was held to be one of the completest gentlemen of his time, and he seems, as I understand the matter, to owe the rank he occupies at present in the sight of the world to the undying lustre cast by unsurpassed rectitude of mind and purity of reputation upon an insipid romance and a collection of mediocre sonnets. It is the lofty prominence, attained by Sidney as a military hero and as a young English aristocrat, with popular and endearing attributes, which has given the “*Arcadia*” (the *Arcadia* of the poets, not of geography) its place among our classics, and tempted us to look for beauties in the “*Astrophel and Stella*.” The common rule is reversed. It is much the same as in the case of Dr. Johnson. We admire Sidney’s works, because we admire him. The Man and the Book pass under one voucher. So it is with Izaak Walton. Let us all grant the work a pleasant one and the writer an amiable character; but do not let us be dupes of the grown-up child’s fetish, which the excellent bookseller has set up for our worship and his profit. Let us not, for God’s sake, be parties to the degradation of a favourite author into a vulgar commercial stalking-horse.

How few have read the “*Arcadia*”? How few, if we put the inquiry, would not pronounce it to be delicious? Alas! it is dull to satiety. And how few have the courage to own, as I hereby do, that they have laid down their copies of such celebrated writers as Lovelace, Suckling, Carew, Waller, and dozens more, both lyrists and dramatists, with disappointment at the result and surprise at the prevailing opinion. On the contrary, Randolph gains much on reperusal and Herrick something, albeit in the pages of the latter is a surfeit of poor ribaldry offensive alike to the mind and the taste.

He affords an example of the force of character in the personal history of a man who, whatever he may have owed to being a Sidney of Penshurst, and to having perished on a famous battle-field in his prime, owed a great deal more to the nobility of his intellect and heart. His works of themselves would assuredly not have kept his fame green; nor was it quite in the fitness of things that they should.

Look, on the other hand, at Montaigne. His own age viewed him as a distinguished, if somewhat eccentric, country gentleman, an efficient and loyal public functionary. There is scarcely any authority for the presumption, that the essayist harboured an idea that his book would acquire the lofty and enduring rank, which we know that it holds in the literature of Europe and the world. The qualities which won for him the confidence and regard of his sovereign and countrymen have been thrown into the background by those, which it demanded more than a century to enable critics and readers to discern. He presented a double personality: that in which he was visible to those about him and that in which it is our higher privilege to see him. For it is to be carefully remembered that, although the generations immediately succeeding him respected and valued his book, they were insensible to the immense distance which we have learned to place between it and every other book of the kind, not only in the French language, but in any. If it is not flattering Sir William Cornwallis too much to term him a brother essayist, I may just notice that the latter in a very dull volume printed in 1600 does actually refer to Montaigne's work as one suitable for "profitable recreation"—the critic was only enabled to judge from portions which he had seen translated by Florio, and which still remained unprinted; but, on the whole, one of the great master-pieces of intellect had to wait long after that date to receive the homage its due.

The "Travels" in their way are as curious and idiosyncratic as the essays; but the latter have stood between them and the public; and a bookseller, whom Montaigne's biographer, St. John, once asked about them, stated that they were not worth reprinting, as they were of very little value—that is, the worthy did not think they would sell.

So far as it is possible to form an opinion, Chaucer achieved, while living, a more than average share of social consideration



and eminence. He married well, was a man of business and of the world, and had a keen enjoyment of existence. But let us not put ourselves in the situation of his contemporaries, and suppose that he was held by them in anything drawing near to the esteem in which we hold him, as the father of our poetry. *They* regarded him as a personage of gentle blood, of observant mind, of pleasant conversation, of fine endowments. But in his bodily presence they were very far (as was natural) from hailing the advent among them of a star of the first magnitude, a son of the morning ushering in a new epoch, a writer of the highest order of genius. That they left to us. He is ours in fee simple.

How glorious, in our present way of thinking, to have met such an one, and to have held him by the hand! yet, after all, who would not prefer the refreshing sensibility, which is among the numerous privileges we enjoy not the least, of reading the—alas! fragmentary—"Canterbury Tales" with opened eyes to the deadness of those former times, which judged him such another only as Gower, or Occleve, or Lydgate?

Look, again, at Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio! Did their contemporaries see them with our eyes? Why, well-nigh five centuries came and went, ere any of us caught the true focus, ere the world grew wiser than the men and women, by whom that grand human triad was surrounded and elbowed.

What manner of thing, then, however, is fame, of what worth is genius, if four hundred years must elapse, before the world gives its verdict out upon a man who was the common friend of humanity and the common benefactor of literature? The time is not so far distant, when we were unable to distinguish the difference between Congreve and Shakespear, or, if we did, awarded the palm to the more modern and legible poet. It was after Congreve's day that people set to thinking what authors lived before Pope, and whether the "Canterbury Tales" were worth perusing in any English but Dryden's. It is not so much to boast of that Chaucer's fame stands at last built on indestructible foundations, and that we have learned to dispense with the services of his candle-holder!

Spenser, from all that we can learn, was a man of the world as well as a man of letters. His poems were composed in the intervals of business, like the Essays of Sir Arthur Helps. He officiated at one time as secretary to a bishop of Rochester, whom

he had known at Cambridge, without any of his biographers being aware of it, till it was pointed out by myself; but he was *par excellence* the agriculturist and historian, and if his farming operations at Kilcolman had been successful, he might have thought it less worth his while to communicate to us what he did, and might have dimly survived as a country gentleman—such another as Mr. Hastings of Dorsetshire, the son, brother, and uncle of an earl. I scarcely possess the courage to say exactly what I feel about the “Faëry Queen” and his other poetical works, although I am fairly sure that in my opinion I do not stand alone. The contemporary estimation of Spenser seems to have been higher and warmer than that of Shakespear, and to have been more uninterrupted. I also fear that he has, like Milton, been taken more upon trust.

Those writings of Chaucer, by which he is best known, were pictures of the life in which he mixed and of the men whom he met. His leaning to the matter-of-fact side as a politician and diplomatist does not shock our prejudices and preconceived notions in the same way as if he had been a great romantic bard. Neither he nor Spenser made as good a thing out of literature as the author of the “Northern Farmer.” It is, no doubt, judicious to let out one’s genius on the handsomest possible terms; yet it dissipates, as it were, some of the divine halo, when we find that one whose song breathes a sublime and moving indifference to mundane affairs, is a Jew in private life and a dead shot at a bargain. It strikes me that Mr. Browning will be a gainer by-and-by in this respect. His fortune was as modest as a poet’s should be. His reputation did not smack unpleasantly of the Share-list and the Stock Exchange.

Nor was Shakespear’s case so different as it may at the first glance appear. His “Venus and Adonis,” his “Lucrece,” and his “Sonnets” were the exercises of his youth, and have all the beauty and all the blemishes of early work. But to the successful structure of the plays, on which his fame stands, as accurate and practical a knowledge of life and mankind as Chaucer possessed was positively essential. Chaucer is the poet of Nature rather than of sentiment. He was one of the earliest laymen (Langland of Malvern had gone before him), who familiarized and fascinated English readers with a broad and masculine style and a rich and caustic humour, powerfully contrasting with the

dull and pedantic monkish school of poetry and thought. Neither could afford to shut their eyes and ears, like the late Mr. Herbert Spencer, to the scenes passing around them—to the common talk of the time. Both as regards the lyrical and dramatic productions of Shakespear, when certain contemporary applause extended to him only in common with many other writers, whose rank has not been maintained or recovered, had died away, two centuries and a half were destined to elapse, before a true idea was formed of his claim to our admiration and gratitude, and cartloads of his early printed work fed the ovens and kitchen fires of his native country.

We admire all these great writers without invariably considering how different were and are the source and degree of their greatness. We allow high rank to Dryden and Pope, as we do to Shakespear, and we do not discriminate between the sublime intellectual inspiration of the Stratford poet and the mere culture of form and style, between creative and plastic, literary art. Waller, Dryden, and Pope refined our language and versification, but they added little to our national riches in insight and thought. Spenser in the old time, and Tennyson in ours, overlaid the ancient romantic literature with new diction and imagery; but the essence was already there. We do not fully realize the merit and services of Shakespear, till we see how much in actual virgin ore we owe to him, in spite of his disadvantages and inequalities; the egregious critic, who once described him as an irregular genius, was not far perhaps from the truth; in his irregularity lay his unique power no less than his peculiarly original temper and touch.

Whether in the time that lies before us anything truly great will be done, is a question worth turning over in our minds. For my own part, I am afraid that the world is growing old, and that its sublime youth has fled, never to return.

The grand masterpieces of former times were produced under conditions which no longer prevail, and which are unrecallable. Our liberal institutions, favourable as they may be to the assertion and establishment of individual right, contain within them the germs of intellectual decadence; our increasing population, educated in democratic ideas of political freedom, brings with it a struggle for life and bread, fatal to the existence of genius of the first rank. We gravitate to mediocrity, and the longer we

live, and the more numerous we become, the smaller will be the proportion of new *chefs d'œuvre* in all the branches of art. We shall be forced to admire what it will be out of our power to emulate. Nobody in the generations to come of social brotherhood and internecine competition will consent to endure poverty and toil in order to enable him to place before the world some monument as durable as itself. We are busy manufacturers, but our creations go a very little way indeed to swell the store in hand. Raphael, Correggio, and Titian could hardly do more in their several ways; for if they infused into their portraits or figures more expression than they found there, it was an expression reflected from themselves; nor can the daring and apparently fantastic combinations of Turner be called untrue to Nature, when we see that the latter is apt to indulge in the wildest vagaries of cloud, wave, and other form, involving, according to local conditions, endless varieties of light and shade effects. A work of art is a selection of circumstances poetically treated; and if we entertain a doubt as to Turner's fidelity, he must have the benefit of it.

Contrasting literature with art, and even one branch of art with another, I affirm that for one person who executes a first-rate poem in prose or verse, especially doubtless the latter, fifty—nay, five hundred will *turn out* a picture, which shall be unexceptionably good, and prove a source of embarrassment to the Hanging Committee at Burlington House. This is because in painting a combination of technical artifices comes to the aid of the worker, who is more usually a student of new effects, like the *modiste*, than of new ideas; while the poet is destitute of such an auxiliary agency, and if he even resorts to eccentricity of phraseology or rhythm, is in danger of making himself and his work ridiculous. The sculptor, again, is largely dependent on his own skill, as shade, perspective and colour assist the illusion only in a very modified degree; and, besides, our manners and prejudices are a barrier against originality of design in this direction. In fact, in all departments, genius becomes at a loss for fresh types, and even Mr. Orchardson has returned to the pre-Raphaelite style, and in despair of finding anything new, copies what he sees before him, and copies it *very* well!

We have grown into a way of re-casting old thought in modern moulds; it is rarely indeed that any one breaks the charmed line,

and enlarges the radius of speculation and inquiry; whatever we do, even if we do not know it, or own it to ourselves, is a paraphrase from some earlier author on paper or on canvas. A few minds, as the ages proceed, supply original material, which the rest of us translate in ways as various as the changes in music. The greatest triumphs of ancient skill and power were accomplished in an epoch of general vassalage, dominated by a few sovereign minds.

Some prose epigrammatist, with whom I cannot agree, said that a man who has two languages has no country. But the converse may be true of men of genius. A great poet need not trouble himself much about his pedigree. He is born of a muse, without a father. Mr. and Mrs. So-and-So, senior, were probably rather uninteresting. Why should we be asked to buy an early London Directory, because it contains the name and address of Mr. Pope the Elder? These are genealogical ineptitudes.

Now, there is Warton's "History of English Poetry"—an unfinished *torso* as it were, often obsolete, often inaccurate, yet it has already survived many later, nay, better attempts in the same direction, and it will survive many more. It is like a broken column erected to a man's memory. I think of it as it was composed, of the spirit in which it was done, of the environments of the writer, and it seems almost sacrilegious to have revised it.

Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy" has been rescued from oblivion by the successive offices of Johnson and Lamb. It is a curious storehouse of extracts and quaint suggestions, false ethics, morality and philosophy. But for all that it is a book, for it is a genuine transfer to paper of the thoughts and reflections of a man of an original, if not a very high, cast of intellect.

We think of Keats, not as the son of a butcher, but as the author of the "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Endymion." How many men attain the age at which he died, ignorant of the alphabet of composition—not butchers' sons, but English gentlemen, who have been through the whole costly curriculum of a fashionable education!

In official life, which embraces so wide a range of employment and so large a proportion of our educated intelligence, the most eminent characters are scions of the Nemo gens. My good old acquaintance, Mr. Henry Pyne, mentioned an individual whom he recollected—"one of the ablest men in England,"—he was

some Ecclesiastical Commissioner. But his celebrity was as enduring as that of an agricultural labourer. He went down to the bottom, and there is not a ripple left to shew where he sank. I have forgotten even his once familiar name; and the world is with me there. Yet some of these Government automatons are fine creatures in their way, and are caressed by society *faute de mieux*.

Public officials of all grades, the Executive inclusive, constitute an indispensable apparatus of a quality to involve in certain ruin any private firm, however wealthy, and which has to be incessantly recruited from the incalculable numbers of those who make such pursuits their career, and have no capacity for things of higher reach; and we go down, as we go on. *Decrescimus eundo*.

Even a Minister of the Crown generally finds it sufficient to deliver long speeches, in the cross-meshes of which he has to beware of entangling and losing himself: to draw a heavy salary: to be of the most honourable privy council: if he succeeds in his plans, to look as if he expected success; if he fails, to shrug his shoulders and express his unnegotiable sorrow. How few of those public men whom one has known are remembered with pleasure and satisfaction? Their popularity is cheap and current. Their attainments are shallow and artificial. If their faults and tricks are not discovered in their lifetimes, they are dragged into daylight by a too accurate and conscientious biographer, who leaves them, before he concludes, bare standing room in the gallery of fame.

A vice-chancellor or an under-secretary of State, who is not also a man of culture (I was going to say genius) is a grand sort of fellow for the time being from a bureaucratic considering point; but two yards of earth, placarded with a few lines of elegiac romance, are the usual area and boundary of his posthumous experience.

At Cowes, in the Isle of Wight, is the monument of Edwards of Halifax, the bookseller, who was also a fancier and collector of literary rarities, and reached the acme of his ambition when he became the owner of the Bedford Missal. He is represented with the book under his arm. What pastoral simplicity could exceed this? This man desired nothing more than to go down to future ages as the successful competitor for an unique MS.! We may not know who painted the missal for the Regent Bedford; but

at least we know who bought the volume once at an auction ! Is this fame, or a burlesque upon it ? Edwards was not a connoisseur ; he was merely the acquirer of a book which connoisseurs had appraised for his benefit ; yet he was a degree or so more respectable than the illiterate and swaggering American of the day, for whom the connoisseur and the expert so successfully lay their bait. Forsooth, however, there are lower depths, even down to the honest parochial folks who have their names handed down on the walls of a water-closet as those of the patriots who erected it.

## XIV

### THE SUBJECT CONTINUED

WE are in possession of riches fineless, the spoils of time, the trophies of ages. The past is an open volume, of which we can turn over the leaves at our leisure, compare notes with the ancients, and (if we choose) plume ourselves on our superiority to them. The men who lived before us were destitute of this obvious and striking advantage, and were obliged to manage without prototypes and precedents. They passed their days, and died unconscious of the honours which would attend upon their ashes, like the poor villager Correggio. They had not the complacency of some modern authors; for, if it had been so, they would have done as little perhaps.

Archimedes was ignorant of many matters which a modern engineer treats as the rudiments of his profession. Many persons are apt to look on Owen the palæontologist as a man of original genius, which he *was*, and also as the creator of the science, which he was not. For Buffon and Cuvier were before him and they merely followed in the steps of the Italian philosophers and anatomists, who had been the true pioneers in these momentous discoveries, and why do we turn again and again to the accounts of Watt and of George Stephenson, and even Brassey, "the engineman," if it be not on a similar ground?—because they gained the battle of which their humbler successors have ever since enjoyed the inexhaustible spoils. Mr. Babbage or Mr. Mill viewed as child's-play problems which to Bacon and Hobbes formed sources of long and anxious thought. But I do not know whether this is more than some one sagaciously observed, that mankind is the real discoverer; and the author of "*Le Vieux-Neuf*" has amply shown that in a majority of cases men of the first rank in the mechanical and physical sciences are entitled to no higher credit than that attachable to restitution or development.

The late poet-laureate wrote more than sufficient to earn him a wider and brighter fame than Homer—if he had not happened to live two thousand years or so later than Homer; and even the



art of Shakespear for a similar reason yields precedence to the art of Sophocles. There are plenty of people who persuade themselves that Thomas Moore is as good a poet as Anacreon—and better, that “Hohenlinden” is finer than all the odes of Pindar, and that we should have thought as highly of the author of the “Hunchback” as we do of our national poet, if he had flourished as long ago.

Human nature and genius may be always the same in their essence; but even a man of genius has been governed at all times by circumstance and by the relation of his work to his own experience. Sentiment, pathos and fancy are dangerous play-things; and our greatest writers in every age have not usually been the pets of society and the drawing-room.

It is an entertaining illustration of the incongruous and vague ideas which even fairly-educated persons form on the subject of literary repute, that some one objected the other day to Pepys, that he was not a very high-class writer. If he had been so from an University man's or schoolmaster's point of view, he might have produced works of a correspondingly instructive and elevating character, but he would not have written the most durably interesting Diary in the English language. He is what he is; vulgar, ridiculous, delightful. The judicious creature to whom I have referred delivered his censure when a friend had read to him certain portions of the Diary in the original MS. It does not appear whether they were the suppressed passages where Pepys describes his adventure with the pretty Dutch lady, or where he secretes something in the chimney; nor does it signify. It would have been the same, if the late Mr. Registrar Pepys (good soul!) had had submitted to the test of his intellectual acumen extracts from “Tom Jones” or the “Sentimental Journey,” or, still worse, the “Life of Mr. Richard Turpin of Hampstead.” None of these productions, permanent and valuable as they may be in the eyes of some, would have reached, perhaps, the desired standard of gentlemanly excellence. An English library of first-rate authors in prose and verse, formed under the auspices of such an adjudicator, would exclude certain names of which the ear has grown enamoured. Nevertheless, O Mr. Registrar, the Diarist, to whom you seemed shy of claiming consanguinity, was Samuel Pepys, Esquire, F.R.S., Secretary to the Admiralty and to the Trinity House, the cousin of an Earl and the trusted

adviser of two kings, and last, not least, a generous patron of literature; and who were you, sir?

It has often struck me that the fame of Butler rests on a basis which is very generally misunderstood. He was born, and lived, in an atmosphere of serio-comic humour; lists might be easily furnished of men who had written quite as clever things—even cleverer—on a small scale as his on a large one. But then, even if “Hudibras” shared the liability of all extensive undertakings to unequal performance, it was a great and impressive work, appealing on its first appearance to a public which had seen plenty of such attempts, yet never before in so systematic and epic a form—on so broad a canvas; and then Butler was fortunate in meeting with an early editor in Dr. Grey and an early translator in Mr. Towneley.

Perchance we are a little in the dark still about the true history, station, and gettings of the old Troubadours; but the general impression we form from available information is that they were rather handsomely used people, who ate, and drank, and made merry, at others’ expense, and sowed their wild oats remarkably late. They catered pretty successfully, as times went, to the commencing taste for music of a somewhat less complex and artistic description than would suit critical audiences now. These minstrels present themselves to our view corporately; we think of them as a body of men, who conferred a lasting benefit on letters; we know next to nothing of them as individuals; we shrug our shoulders, and shake our head, at the attempt made sometimes to give us a systematic account of their lives and characters. It will not do; we merely get a romantic middle-age mythology as impalpable as the pagan pantheon.

But Blondel may be an exception. Him an anecdote (most probably an apocryphal one) makes stand out from the rest. He, for one, is a *person*. There were plenty as good as he was, but he has had the great fortune to come down to us in a pleasant, pretty story, one of the favourites of everybody’s childhood. Much in the same way we are to understand that in the days of Ovid, Horace, and Virgil, there were poets to spare, who wanted very little to be Ovids, Horaces, and Virgils, but who have never been heard of much since. *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnone multi*. There may have been many a Blondel; but the Blondel who sang beneath Richard Cordelion’s prison-window the old familiar

## THE SUBJECT CONTINUED

lay, is the only one posterity recognises. Time has kept in-different count, it may be. Nay, the relentless antiquary will tell you, that the gallant monarch had left his cell before any one arrived to identify or redeem him. So, again, although there are many Coleridges, future ages will deem only one worth recollecting or discussing.

A similar sort of fortune has befallen the prehistoric Orpheus, who has become the central figure round which it is usual to group a series of feats in poetry and music. Of his individuality we really know nothing. He is as completely a hero of romance as Hercules or Arthur. The Hymns which pass under his name are doubtless as apocryphal as his journey to Hades, yet withal, putting aside the mythological superstructure, one seems to arrive at the discernment of an actual personage who was the first perhaps to introduce among the primitive Thracians the superior culture of northern India.

The late Mr. George Lewes was a man of acknowledged capacity and learning, and doubtless had at his fingers' ends many abstract problems which it cost Socrates a lifetime to investigate and solve; but does that alter our comparative estimate of Socrates and Mr. Lewes any more than the familiarity of a modern engineer with many points which it cost George Stephenson years of patient labour and thought to discover, places him on a level with Stephenson? Their experiments are his truisms. We may predicate the same sort of thing of Cavendish and Lavoisier in relation to many a modern chemist, who can never hope, nevertheless, to enjoy their rank or celebrity.

It is extremely probable, again, that Count Moltke considered the tactics of the great Napoleon obsolete and useless; but whoever should on that account assert the German chamber-strategist to be a person of superior genius to the French Emperor, would assert an obvious platitude. What editorial whipper-snapper does not know as much about ballad poetry as Bishop Percy? Yet in the bishop's day the taste for such literature, as well as the conversance with it, was so limited, that a man could acquire a great and lasting name by associating himself with a publication, which may now be regarded as superannuated.

This train of thought draws me very naturally into the reflexion, that in all first attempts in important literary research there resides an enduring interest and an agreeable atmosphere;

apart from the question of accuracy and completeness. Surely the man who lays the foundation, if it is a sound one, deserves as large a mead of praise as he who comes after and builds upon him. It must be a poor author indeed who does not advance beyond his predecessor. Dr. Head's "*Historia Numorum*," whatever may be its defects, is superior to any other work on the subject in English, and so it ought to be. Dr. Head had the labours of all former numismatists before him, and has at his command the national collections and the national time.

I for my own part often turn over with a sort of satisfaction, not quite easy to define or to vindicate, the writings of Thomas Pennant of Downing. He was a gentleman of fortune, taste, and culture, and I appreciate him, I apprehend, as if he were my contemporary, or I his rather, and I prefer his no doubt often imperfect statements and conclusions because, when he set them down, they represented the knowledge of the day, possibly outstripped it. I have an agreeable sensation, when one of his books is in my hand, that he and I are fellow-travellers, and that he will shew me all that is worth seeing. I keep at my elbow a set of the *Penny Magazine*—I, who am a stickler for the latest information on every subject—and I delight in glancing now and again at its pages, because they and I sprang into existence just about the same time, and they, and a few such others, are my earliest literary associations and my tenderest. Once more I can understand how it was that Dr. Johnson turned in his old age to a little old obsolete book on London by Burton or Crouch, which had charmed him in his youth. It was not the literary composition or instruction; it was the link and remembrancer.

Charles Knight and the brothers Chambers are none the less commendable as pioneers of cheap and wholesome literature, because their publications are at present of insignificant value. Their reputation will survive that of the men who have improved on them. Looking back over the elapsed years, there is a feeling, which one can neither discard nor justify, about certain publications current in one's youth, in one's apprenticeship to study: in my case it was the works which bore the imprint of Knight—his "*History of England*," his dainty little shilling volumes, his edition of Goldsmith's "*Animated Nature*," about all of which the writer entertains sentiments and recollections, such as, perhaps, no other literary productions are capable of awakening. They

present themselves to his mind's eye as they looked and felt fifty or sixty years ago on his first introduction to them. They are untrustworthy and obsolete; we possess fuller sources of knowledge and superior methods of illustration. What of that? These are no longer booksellers' ware; they are rarefied and refined, like attar of roses. The copies which I held in my boyish hands exist in substance no more; they are freeholders of my brain, prisoners of my imagination, to all beside invisible, incomprehensible.

Posthumous repute, so far as the individual himself is concerned, is (as I have said) a thing of the present, not of the future. It is the gratification of which we may be sensible, while we live, that we shall be remembered in a world to which we no longer belong, and by generations with which we have no more to do than the Pharaohs, while we, on our part, are rever-sioners in fee of our ancestors' achievements no less than of their titles and fortunes, and take credit to ourselves for what they did—perhaps more than they took—or deserved. How many of our ancient and noble houses have inherited their names and fame in the same manner as their personal chattels! Charles Lamb, in a fit of spleen, once said: "Damn the age! I will write for antiquity"—reversing the sentiment of the character in Schiller, who would be a citizen of the future; but to him the pleasure began and ended in the sense of superiority to the venomous and vituperative Tory critics of that day. What is it to him that his works are reprinted in octavo for the use of the simpler sort of gentlemen forming libraries, and that his autograph letters are prized by the virtuoso? What, again, does it signify to Pepys that his Diary lies at last before the world in its full amplitude and nudity, and is a favourite commonplace book of the book-maker?

Is it an indemnity to the sublimest of enthusiasts, the most inspired of seers, William Blake, that his grand inventions—some worthy of Michael Angelo, some Dantesque in their splendid boldness—which awakened no response in the men and women of his time, but which were luminous transfers from the most opulent of imaginations, at present command the inexhaustible dollars of the omnipotent sweepers of the universe, not because they are fine, but because they are dear? His supernatural possession, his intellectual fecundity and rapture, the very in-

sensibility of the world to his unique genius, these, down to the instant when at his last human breath he beheld the heavens opening as if to receive him, these were far beyond current fame, inexpressibly above a buyer's money. How late in the day the world discovered that a man, who shunned publicity and distinction — Herbert Spencer — was the greatest intellectual ornament of the Victorian era—not till he lay in his shroud at Brighton! for even Haeckel has lived to see the shameful abuse showered on him by the Church and its tools discredited and condemned. To any such among us as have crossed the silent, irrepassable river what does it signify if the voice of detraction be hushed, if the verdict of the worshipful critics be unanimously reversed?

It is, in short, with us men and women as it is with wine or a bronze or a canvas, the tone and the atmosphere, which go so far to render us appreciable at our real worth, if not beyond it; both demand a force and a charm, nay, an illusion, which time only can render. One may be as witty as Voltaire, as profound as Bacon or Shakespear, as entertaining as Sterne, or as learned as Bentley; but the jury which is to deliver that verdict is not to be empanelled till we are well beyond hearing. It may be of personages, who stood at our side, but hesitated to offer us honour—nay, hope, or it may be of such as we never beheld, and as will flatter us by the regret, that they are limited to a posthumous rite, just with a bonus perhaps for deferred satisfaction.

On the whole, it is scarcely surprising, that the literary men of our own time do not, as a rule, covet this sort of reputation, and prefer to bask in the sunshine of contemporary favour. They may echo the motto on the covers of some of Grolier's books: *Portio mea, Domine, sit in Terra Viventium*.

There are few persons belonging to ancient English life and history, as to whom there has been a greater amount of controversy and doubt than the ballad-hero Robin Hood. Some affirm that he flourished under one reign, some under another. Some regard him as a type or a myth; others incline to the opinion that, as all the writings of an Homeric cast have been affiliated on a single individual, so Robin Hood has had all the glory of achievements belonging to a certain class and a certain cycle. He is a generic outlaw and archer. But as it is with Homer, so with him. He is an individual to us; he is as palpable, as much flesh

and blood, as William the Conqueror or Cedric the Saxon, as William Wallace or William Tell. He is as much a part of our passed annals as the Battle of Bannockburn, or even as the Massacre of Glencoe. He will be fresh in our memories and our literature a thousand years hence. He is as standard as Magna Charta or the Habeas Corpus Act. He is to-day a living fact in the world. The reputations of the vast majority of us are by comparison annuals.

A great many men have been forgotten who helped to constitute classes, which will never be forgotten; as benefits remain, the doers lost sight of. The converse, however, would appear to hold good in the case of one whom I have just mentioned, who was not only a minstrel, but the greatest of minstrels—Homer. For, according to the received opinion, there were several hands in the “*Iliad*,” not reckoning the Renaissance embellishments and interpolations which, like the “*Shield of Achilles*” in Book 18, speak for themselves; it was not the work of a single pen or a single period, there is internal evidence of posterior interpolations, for the most part themselves of ancient date, as the “*Shield of Achilles*” with all its elaborate artistic details is mentioned by Euripides; but conventionally or at least popularly the great epic is treated as the production of one mind, as much as “*Gulliver*” or “*Robinson Crusoe*” is. If its plural composition be anything more than a mere theory, therefore, several men are permanently and irrecoverably merged in that one whom we call *Homer*. If the view is to be abandoned, and Homer was a person, just as Virgil and Pope were, then it has to be said, that his fame is of the truest and highest kind: living with the language in which his writings are preserved; as immortal as he fabled the gods of his country and country people, and, like them, never to grow old! Yet, whatever may be the real history of the “*Iliad*,” the “*Odyssey*” impresses me with a far greater feeling of homogeneity, and strikes me as more human, less local, and less temporary. It narrates incidents which occurred thousands of years ago hundreds of miles away; but there are passages in the epic, which draw tears, whenever I read them. I am helpless as a child. It is, like “*Robinson Crusoe*,” without note of time and place. I read about Circe, about Calypso, about the Sirens, about the Lotophagi, and almost wonder if they are there still, should one take ship in search of

them, following the sailing card of the great Ionian. Such books put one out of humour with the narrow precision of historians and all their documentary pedantry. I have already said something about the individuality or pluralism of Homer; yet one cannot resist a suggestion that if the epic had been the product of several hands, or had even been submitted to the assimilation of a general editor, traces of the original process of development must have somehow been detected by experts.

Again, in estimating Homer, it is not unusual to class him with Virgil; but than such a collocation nothing can be more unjust and improper. Virgil was a secondary genius who based his epic on the Homeric model, and his "Bucolics" and "Georgics" on the writings of Theocritus and Varro. The other was the veritable *Poëta*.

We have perhaps a second example of the same sort of thing in the writings of Walter Mapes, with whose name tradition has chosen to identify a variety of those strange old goliard verses, notwithstanding the circumstance that there is no actual proof even of his share in their authorship. Mapes is the Homer of mediæval satire. He is the god-parent of all the poetical foundlings in a certain school, which were floating up and down the world of letters, fatherless, in or about his time. He is known for what he in all probability did *not* write, while his own undoubted productions have scarcely been heard of!

Contemporaries seldom, if ever, get the correct *focus* in looking at such works and such men. They are too close to them. Both require to be viewed at a distance; they want the aid of perspective, a mellowed light and atmospheric transparency, which come only with time. On the other hand, it is to be feared that, in forming our estimate of the literary celebrities of other days, sight is not always or fully gained of the true viewing and judging points, and if we enjoy the advantage of studying the works of men so different as Spenser, Shakespear, and Bacon, without prejudice and bias, we are naturally apt to forget or undervalue the prepossessions and disabilities which influenced their minds and coloured their work.

It becomes less surprising that a thousand years or so should have to elapse before a man of genius, born in a rude age, finds his proper level in the scale of public opinion, and is seen in his just proportions, when we reflect that full homage was not paid



to the matchless gifts of Shakespear till two centuries after his death, and when we consider that there are living with us men and women of the highest intellectual pretensions, whose names, after they are gone, will be probationers, like candidates for certain clubs, many and many a year, before they pass over into neutral ground.

Very rich men, who are not, as a rule, persons of genius in a high sense of the term, have their own methods of rendering themselves immortal. If they cannot write like Shakespear, paint like Titian or even Turner; if they fail to shine in the battle-field or in the forum, they can offer up to the gods their surplus currency, and link their names for ever with some colossal scheme of benevolence and philanthropy. Granted that they have no literary, artistic, or other lofty gifts, they have it well in their power to barter for cash the products of such as have. It naturally does not enter into their plans to relieve others clandestinely. Your Astors, your Pierpont Morgans, your Passmore-Edwards's, your Guinness's, your Carnegies and other twentieth century financial saurians, leave private applicants, however meritorious and however modest, unsatisfied, nay, unanswered; for it is not their game "to do good by stealth"; they must do it in the market-place to the sound of trumpets, amid the upraised voice and hands of the multitude.

In the common affairs of every-day life, we settle small claims, and take time from our larger creditors as of right. The public pays its clever fellows out of hand, so much in ready money, and so much in pats or scratches on the back, and they have their reward; but where such a matter as immortality is in the question, it seems to feel that there is no such haste. A thousand years hence the rememberable dead will not have so enormously multiplied.

Of men who, in our own time or at least in our own memory, have discounted in the way just suggested their claim upon posterity, the two Disraelis are notable examples. The younger one was, on the Darwinian principle, a capricious, but not wholly unintelligible, evolution from the elder. The author of the "Curiosities of Literature" and other equally notorious publications, whose father was a door-keeper at the Stock Exchange, was probably the most successful literary charlatan of his day, as his son was the most successful political one of ours. The

author of the "Revolutionary Epic," and "Star Chamber," and of the famous *mot*, "Sedition is my *forte*," was the chief of a party, whose contempt for him was as thorough and just as his for it. *Rien ne reussit aussi bien que le succès.*

*Interim vivendum est*, is a maxim which the world clearly does not believe to be applicable to men of genius, or did not, at any rate, formerly. It used to be, if it is not still, of opinion that it is high time to think of a person's merits, when his name has acquired a classical *bouquet*, when his memory has reached the odour of sanctity. We may have among us at the present moment men who have written essays as fine as Elia's and poems as fine as Pope's. But there is not sufficient distance and perspective to assist the illusion yet. How can one, from whom we had a letter yesterday, be equal to Lamb? How can an author, with whom we are in the habit of brushing coat-sleeves in Bond Street, make out pretensions to stand on a footing with Alexander Pope or even with Alexander Dyce? He may be as good, nay, better; but he has not acquired the necessary atmosphere. He lacks the tone, which age alone gives, like the crust on old wine. They may become our grandchildren's classics, may be heroes to generations unborn. *Nobis non nostra.* Besides, it would never answer to acknowledge that one, with whom we are in immediate contact, is all that we even hold him to be in our hearts. For his pretensions would become too excessive to bear.

As a rule, the poet who writes for his own age too often writes for no other. He is "a man of the time." His humanity is narrow and current, like an almanac calculated for a certain meridian and a term of years. His works of themselves have no circumstance or context—are little more than passages of fashionable life neatly versified. To us they may be literature, but to our successors and to future epochs they will be mere printed paper. Their author is a fraction, not a whole quantity. Yet his social standing or his prestige as a good fellow lends the reviewers their cue, and the world has, as usual, to discover the truth at its leisure—and to its cost.

It is a question which seems rather naturally to present itself to one, in turning over the pages of such publications as the *Biographia Britannica*, the *Annual Register*, the *Biographie Universelle*, and the *Penny Cyclopædia*, who the men were that made these books what we see them! To whom do we

owe the English edition of Peter Bayle, the Philosophical Dictionary of Voltaire, as well as half the ephemerides, with which the shelves of the British Museum groan, of which the mere catalogue is a sort of library? Nobody knows, except, perhaps, a few inquirers, who have taken a leaf out of Captain Cuttle's book; and is not this the fate of all journalists, cyclopædists, and lexicographers, unless, like Johnson and Goldsmith, they rise to something better? Surely they should work only on the most paying conditions possible! It is the same thing, when we turn over the leaves of the "Literary Anecdotes" of Nichols. Here we are confronted on every page with encomiastic memorials of personages respecting whom the writers and posterity appear to take opposite sides.

Even those who contributed to the too much lauded "Dictionary of National Biography," of which a carefully revised edition would be really valuable, would have been clearly unwise to estimate their services too low; for their wages are the measure of their reward. The conditions of hire are inclusive. One beats the bush, and another catches the hare. Many do the work, but one wears the garland. As it was with Kippis, Chalmers, and Rose, so it is going to be with the conductors of this newer enterprise.

The Key which has been made to anonymous authors is a project about which I freely own I was never particularly sanguine. It looks to me like exhuming a corpse in order to restore animation. A man who does not choose to reveal himself to his contemporaries is not likely to make a figure afterward. Fame does not grant *post-obits* of that kind. We have even a feeling that if the authorship of the "Letters of Junius" was to be settled, it would be fatal to the interest there is at present in the question. If the writer turned out to be some celebrated person, the public might become of opinion that these productions were inferior to some others he had put his name to, and so were not of any farther curiosity; while, on the other hand, if they could be proved to have come from an obscure pen, the world would be apt to suspect a hoax. It would have him either way! A man cannot dispose of his reputation by will, as if it were a chattel, or regulate it by a private Act of Parliament. He cannot direct that his fame shall date from the day of his death, and flourish in perpetuity.

Cowper was as perfect a contrast as could be found to two men of our own time—Bulwer and Dickens, both immeasurably his superiors in genius and power ; but—

“What is the *author*, if the man be nought?”

The very sound of Cowper's name awakens a stealthy tenderness. I should hardly have regarded his works with an interest so great if he had been less good and less unhappy. There is something perhaps, even to a commonplace mind, in feeling that both genius and the want of it have their compensations !

Some writers we seem to like from the accounts of their lives which come to our hands ; and we turn to their works to see if we can find anything to corroborate the favourable impression or estimate. Take Surrey, Cowley, Bolingbroke, Cowper, Johnson. Others we regard with varying feelings. I should have taken off my hat to Evelyn ; I should have held out my hand to Pepys.

How few of us can agree to go anything approaching the whole distance with the sanguine compilers of bygone “*Analecta*” in their estimates of brand-new authors—of the literary constellations, which were to eclipse all or most that preceded them ! Not even at a lady's bidding can we fall into an ecstasy over the poetical genius of Crabbe or of Cowper ; much less can we respond to the enthusiasm for excavating older names and writings from their burial-places, because it is the humour of some one to pose as a discoverer or a champion. Such works as Miss Seward's “*Anecdotes*” largely serve to transmit to us social and human traits of characters, to which we are ever ready to turn and turn again, if it be merely to speculate what were the grounds for such general and extravagant approbation.

The critic who thinks Cowper a great poet is well-nigh capable of thinking anything ; yet the author of the “*Task*” is, curiously enough, not the less dear to us, because his writings are not of a high cast. If we cannot pay very lavish homage to his genius, there is an affectionate association with his memory, partly arising from the relation in which he stood to the men who formed the earlier literary taste of the nineteenth century. But his fame is not robust enough to stand long alone. If he had followed, instead of preceding, the Lake school, it is more than a question whether his rank in letters would have been high, and in estimating his power the fairest mode of judging is by a comparison, not

between him and his successors, but between him and those whose style and spirit he so much assisted in superseding. "John Gilpin," like Gray's "Elegy," is a poor performance enough, when we consider it apart from the circumstances and the age which produced it. Both these poems demand, in order to ensure our unreserved appreciation, the atmosphere in which they first saw the light, just as some books are preferable in the original sheep binding.

The strange reputation of Crabbe, his intelligible decline, and his stranger recall to life, suggest that there must be a sort of feeling about him cognate to that which some of us entertain toward the author of the "Task." To be a respectable divine is, I conclude, an asset. As poets one is assuredly as indifferent as the other; but of the two I should like to be excused for honouring the recommendation to possess the complete works of the writer of the "Parish Register," out of which the reverend bard ingeniously constructed a bizarre portrait-gallery, where antiquaries and scholars had recognised only archæological *data*.

I never look at "Tristram Shandy" without recollecting my ancestor's letter about the author. Sterne is said to have been a hypocritical and heartless sentimentalist. In this respect I imagine that Thackeray's reputation as a writer is likely to be benefited; at all events, if he had wild oats, he sowed them early. I never read any of his works except "Vanity Fair" and the "Ballads"; but the production which most signally took me captive was that thorough little idyll, that self-contained miniature:—

"O what fun !  
Nice plum bun :  
How I wis' it never was done !"

How we feel ourselves transported back to a period of life, when our desires were as limited as they were innocent! But a man must have lived a long while ago, or be a Shakespear, to induce us to regard him from a purely intellectual standpoint, without concerning ourselves with his domestic affairs.

With what a different feeling we view Coleridge and Lamb on this account. Any superiority on the part of the former in mental reach and scholarly attainments seems to be far more than outweighed by the at once amiable and heroic disposition

of the India House clerk. In the case of two men so dissimilar as Johnson and Scott, do we not already perceive that the published records of their careers are likely to prove of more permanent interest than their literary remains. And in good truth it is so with Goldsmith again, whose pleasant unsophisticated personality invests his works with a mysterious and peculiar interest apart from their independent merit and himself with a rank mainly due to that sort of moral prestige.

I might draw up a catalogue of others belonging to different epochs, whose works are secondary to themselves: Sidney, Fulke Greville, Izaak Walton, Charles Cotton, Sir Thomas Browne, Evelyn, Walpole; and I might add even Gray. All these, and many more, are perpetual freeholders of the public regard under a special statute of exemptions. Byron and Shelley, on the contrary, like Bulwer and Dickens, since we have been admitted behind the scenes to a disillusionising knowledge of the authors as individuals, seem to lose some of their fascination; their poetry impresses one as artificial and insincere, as sublimated phraseology. *Bona fides* goes for something even in the labours of the Muses.

With a foreign author, the writer of "Telemachus," is it not much the same? Fenelon used to say that he was more a Frenchman than a Fenelon, and more a man than a Frenchman; and we love and admire him, and forget his nationality, not for the sake of what he wrote, but for the sake of what he was, as we do Cowper, and as we do a far greater writer than either, Pope, who, after all, seems to have shone more as a talker and a man than as a poet—the exact inverse, I take it, of Tennyson.

But I would be disposed to go even farther in respect to the former schools of English poetry. For if one surveys the entire body of writers in some general Anthology—say from Chaucer to the late poet laureate—without any unfair prepossession, how little, out of the vast mass of written matter, recommends itself to approbation? One forms conclusions unfavourable to many a great name, to many an accepted classic, in some cases as a whole, in others in partial measure. But these authors have received their passports, have crossed over to a region where critical *fiats* are inoperative, where public opinion is barred by an unwritten statute.

We look in vain through the pages of the "Epistolæ Obscurorum

Virorum" for the source of the ungovernable merriment of Erasmus on a first perusal of the work when it appeared. But it has fared with this as with many other books, which owed much of their original success to extrinsic or auxiliary circumstances. Take even the "Utopia" of More and the "Moriæ Encomium" of Erasmus himself, the "Dunciad" or the "Rosciad." The lens through which they were read and judged is broken, and they are the only survival of the sequence and group of incidents which alike created and elucidated them.

The literary middle-man is a personage by no means to be underrated—not him of to-day, but the older and more respectable character—more respectable, perhaps, because older. He is the channel through which our circle of agreeable and improving acquaintance has been extended, to whom it is exclusively due, that we know something—a few anecdotes—a fragment or so—of quite a host of ancient authors, whose works have vanished. Aulus Gellius, Photius, Athenæus, are in this way and sense our benefactors, and have surrendered a share of their own personality in the act of handing down to us a taste of other writers, who pleased them in the course of their reading. Possibly the specimens which they have selected are above the average, yet does not one long for what one is perhaps never to behold—for what, if one had it under one's eyes, might prejudice the author in one's opinion? We are prone to speculate on the exact nature of the lost Books of Livy, of Book V. of the "Enchiridion" of Epictetus, and of a hundred other lost gems. Are not all these better as they are in common with thousands of early British publications, of which we have only the names or the title-pages?

We possess a rich inheritance from our ancestors (irrespective of nationality); but the thought, how far richer it might have been, qualifies our satisfaction. We have numerous plays by Euripides and even certain letters, yet we lament the lost drama of "Andromeda" of which Suidas has handed down a line. We have the Commentaries of Cæsar, and we call in vain for his Poems. We wonder whether Athenæus has afforded us any sort of idea of the 750 lost books of Chrysippus. Coming down nearer to our own time, there is the book which the Knight of the Tower made for the use of his daughters, and a strange enough book it is; but, alas! that which he wrote for his sons has

perished ! It is not, in short, the blessings which we enjoy, but those which have been snatched from us, that we covet and lament.

Those whom we now term and think great, were not always termed, if they were thought, so, while they lived. Those who were called great in their lifetime were as a rule called so only by themselves and their backers. Time is the greatest critic, the most inexorable judge of appeals. I lately noted a volume entitled "A Forgotten Past." It was one of a thousand or so of genealogical and heraldic works relative to families and individuals who have preceded us ; and scarcely a single house could boast more than one living name—usually that of the founder. Our Peerages and Baronetages are not what they might seem, Rolls of Fame, but little more than annotated Vocabularies or Directories exhibiting the ascent, the descent, and the evanescence (from a public point of view) of generations of men, and demonstrating how in a long ancestral line the actual notabilities resemble plums in a school pudding. The illustrious names of families are in reality those of individuals. We have to reckon by units. In nine cases out of ten a man can point to a single forerunner, whose mantle more or less ill becomes him, and this consideration makes us turn our thoughts to the disadvantages of hereditary succession. The bulk of the lineage are but *simulacra*—family tokens.

Fame is not one, but manifold. The author and the painter, as well as the follower of other liberal pursuits, may be apt to prize the favourable opinion of the world on their efforts, and to speculate on the verdict of judges unborn. The orator and the advocate, albeit much of the context is so soon lost, are bound to look back at achievements in the Senate and the Forum, which were once on a time honoured in turn by hushed breath and rapturous applause. The auctioneer piques himself on the volume of property of which he disposes in the course of seasons or of a career, and the billiard player glories in the points which he can give to adversaries without hazard. Colonel Cody and Mr. Booth enjoy, each in his way, a prominence which is not vouchsafed to many of their superiors in intellectual accomplishments ; they are *dramatis personæ*, who tread the boards ; but the sound of their footsteps and their voices soon dies away—away for ever. They are of the current and perishable types. They are entitled



to make their own terms, like the fellow who is to be hanged as soon as he has finished his breakfast.

But, after all, are we not all too prone to contemplate life from the direction which has been perhaps accidentally given to our own careers? The soldier, the sailor, the diplomatist, the merchant, the civil servant, the lawyer, does not each at least make his own the centrifugal point round which all other employments revolve; and no two classes of people probably look with greater scepticism, if not disdain, at their fellow-workers than the author and the artist. Yet military and naval experts may consider that skill and courage in the battlefield or on the sea are still entitled to take that precedence over more peaceful and less showy qualifications, which they naturally did, and do, in imperfectly civilised countries. The modern school of biography instructs us, however, where we may find heroes who never wore a sword, and, on the other hand, never used a pen or a brush.

Actors, perhaps, fall under a different category from their literary brethren. They are merely vehicles for the expression of other people's feelings and opinions; but authors are supposed, as a rule, to be the mouthpieces of their own genuine views. Members of the theatrical profession, at the same time and for this very reason, are better let alone. It is a mistake to follow them home. Our acquaintance should end where it begins—before the curtain.

## XV

### ON PERSONS WHO HAVE DONE ONLY ONE THING

*MULTUM, non Multa*, is a maxim which was in force before the fathers began to write in folio. It is one of those good old precepts which come down to us from classical times—a piece of ancient Roman philosophy, as hard and concrete as their cement.

Upon the revival of letters among us, quantity seems to have been more regarded than quality. Our monastic and pre-Lutheran commentators on the Bible and upon the profane writers, like the later German scholiasts, invoiced their time and labour more cheaply than we can manage to do, because they loved learning for its own sake, and literature was to them something better than printer's copy. When men consumed their existence in glossing the Pentateuch or the Psalms of David, the "Iliad" or the "Æneid," and went to their graves without seeing their names on a title-page, or having their fame spread beyond the walls of some priory, what true sublimity of mind they must have had, what a noble thirst, untainted by the shallow vanity of authorship, it must have been, which sprang up in their hearts, and "grew with what it fed on." Then, again, what a prodigious and bewildering monument of the application and perseverance of our ancestors exists for us in those huge, ponderous, unalluring folios, which (when by accident name of scribe or author appears to them) are the only stones marking, as it were, the tomb of some unwearying Dominican or Franciscan, who laboured upon them to his life's thread, and to his knowledge's farthest stretch, with an honest intent. Nay, outside the cloister and beyond our own shores, among the ancients and moderns alike, those who bestowed their whole time and thought on apparent trifles—on the nightingale, on lemon-peel, on the bumble-bee, or on salt, held themselves enough rewarded.

I fear that we have grown less robust of late days. Our insular situation has exposed us to corrupting influences. We are tainted by the effeminacy of our neighbours, if we do not grow

effeminate of our own accord. *Modes de Paris* might be written up in booksellers' shops as well as in millinery establishments and the theatres. The French reprint Bayle's Dictionary and the Glossary of Ducange in more convenient forms. Over here the Scriptures are sold in pocket editions and diamond type, to meet the prevailing taste for what is handy and genteel.

It is an unhappy circumstance that the passion for writing gathers strength as it goes. How far more fortunate, even more famous sometimes, we should be, if we could resolve to occupy our whole life, or the best part of it, in composing some volume or work to be our mediator with all ages to come! What a mistake it seems to encumber ourselves, our names, and our fellows for ever with an unconscionable mountain of printed paper! But there is the *lues*, as irresistible and everlasting as the impulse which prompts us to multiply our species; and there is no remedy at law against the perpetual reproduction of an author's exuberant confidences to his epoch.

Diogenes the Cynic left no literary legacy to his country and to posterity, I believe; but the ideas which governed him were inherited or imitated by two very different men at different times: Etienne de la Boetie, the bosom-friend of Montaigne, and Thoreau of Jersey, the author of "Walden." Both the latter committed to writing their views on the sacrifice of personal independence to artificial laws; and both owe our actual recollection of them, the Frenchman exclusively so, to one circumstance—the identification of their names with a principle, which was not even a new one, and with a book, which embodied that principle. De la Boetie could scarcely have found his way to us even as the expositor of a single theorem, had it not been for the almost peremptory mandate of Montaigne that all succeeding times were to feel toward his *protégé* as he himself did, and of Thoreau it may be said that, had he only written the "Walden," we should quite as highly esteem him, not because we go with him the whole way any more than we do with Diogenes or with De la Boetie, but because he has enriched the world for ever with a sincere and manly book.

Those modern antiques, middle-age Englishmen, had, nevertheless, before them the example of two or three Greek and Roman authors, to say the least, who had left a single treatise or work behind, which was their passport to immortality. One of the

old school-men produced more in a lunar month than Hesiod wrote in the whole course of his life. The entire remains of the Greek poets, collected together, would go into a far narrower compass than the writings of Thomas Aquinas. What has reached us of Sappho or of Erinna, of Anacreon or of Moschus, does not amount in bulk to a fortieth part of many a forgotten commentary on Horace or Virgil. Tibullus and Catullus survive for us in books scarcely bigger than Moore's "Twopenny Post Bag." Whether Quintilian wrote more than his elaborate disquisition "De Institutione Oratoriâ," I do not know, and must confess I hardly care; for that will always make him remembered, and he is not remembered for anything else. I question if there would be so tender a halo round the name of the Lesbian Alceus, if we should entertain the like mystic reverence for the Athenian Menander, whom Plutarch, by the way, tantalises us by preferring to Aristophanes,—if Sappho would have been the same that she is to us, after more than two thousand years, if these writers had been as prolific as Lope de Vega or as Robert Southey, or Time the highwayman had spared as much of them.

It may strike some as a paradox, when I class Horace among those who belong to the present category. It is true enough, that he has left behind him numerous poems, yet they go only to make a single book, in its way as unique as it is untranslatable.

Perhaps, to be sure, we do not always know aright who our gods are, nor the reason of our faith in them. If a new chapter has to be written upon the history of Hero-Worship, it should take in the worship of names and shadows—*Umbra-latry* :

"Are they shadows that we see?  
And can shadows pleasure give?—  
Pleasures only shadows be,  
Cast by bodies we conceive."

A vast proportion of the great names in History and Letters are handed down like any other heirlooms from one generation to another, and no questions are asked. Certain illustrious characters are tenants by prescription and usage. They may demand our admiration or respect, as it were, at common law.

We may be sure that among the Essenes there were other ethic teachers besides Jesus Christ. Yet he stands out in highest relief and unapproached. He can but have borrowed the doctrines

which he enunciated from the older members of the sect, to which he is held to have belonged; and the utmost that he did was to develop them, and to become, like Mahomet, the immediate vehicle for transmitting them to us, associated with his own individuality.

But a man must live some hundreds of years, before his pretensions can be taken for granted. How few authors last so long! I cannot think of as many as half-a-dozen new names at the moment, to which I can promise such duration, even in a single volume octavo.

It does not necessarily follow that people who have only done one thing, are people with only one idea, though the converse may hold good. They have, it may be, indeed done much besides, and done that much well too; but perhaps it was nothing after all that an ordinary man could not have accomplished with tolerable ease, and acquitted himself of with equal credit.

It is not difficult to write letters as good as Gray's, or to compose Greek and Latin odes that would bear comparison with his; but then there is nobody at either of our great Universities who is capable of producing another "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard." The stanzas resemble a set of cameos arranged in the metrical form, and polished with fastidious and almost epicurean daintiness, a little recalling the author's handwriting. It would be painful to see what an ordinary Oxford or Cambridge graduate would make of such a theme, if indeed the original poem were not an inseverable part of the age, which produced it—a piece of its literary costume.

It was of this Elegy, that the old *Monthly Review* spoke as a piece of humble pretensions, yet not without its elegance and merit, which might be true enough of Torell's Italian translation. Certainly it was not thought so highly of in the lifetime of its author as Hammond's "Love Elegies" and Hayley's "Triumphs of Temper." But these two (with many more) have gone to the trunkmaker's, and the Elegy survives. It stands out as clear as noon from all the accumulated dulness and commonplace in Dodsley's collection, like "The Night Watch" and "The Burgomaster," by Rembrandt, in the Galleries at Amsterdam and at Antwerp.

Gray lived upon his reputation as a scholar and a connoisseur, and estimated most highly in his own mind what few have ever heard of, his Criticisms on Art and his Correspondence with

Walpole. At present, for one who has read his Letters, or conned over his Odes, five hundred have mastered his *Elegy*, among whom are many enough ignorant of his having left anything else behind him. My own idea is, that if Gray had had an eye to his posthumous fame, had cast a sidelong glance at the approbation of posterity, he would have failed in producing a work of lasting texture like this.

There is Izaak Walton. He left behind him certain biographies, which in their totality few have read ; but his "Complete Angler" has proved the safety belt which has borne him down the stream of ages to this one. Its history and value are human and literary rather than technical. No one would probably resort to it for advice or for guidance ; many a schoolboy might point out where it is capable of revision ; yet it is a volume which has outstripped all the works of reference on the subject a thousandfold, and for the very reason that it is not a work of reference.

How singular an instance of the caprice of the world we find afforded to us by the fate of Bunyan. His "Pilgrim's Progress" has had thousands upon thousands of readers ; it is perhaps the most popular human work which was ever composed ; and yet his "Holy War," which is nearly as fine, is scarcely known. The latter just falls short by a little of what was necessary to make it immortal, or perhaps, by some subtle dispensation, it was not to be, that one brain should give birth to two books, which would have brought upon the world a never-ending controversy as to their relative excellence. There are two mountains in Switzerland, of which one is Mont Blanc, and the other is Monte Rosa. Both, within a hundred feet or so, are equally lofty ; but everybody has heard of Mont Blanc, while scarcely any one has heard of its rival. The Temple of Solomon is universally famous ; how few of us have a notion that the Cambodian Ang-kor is infinitely finer ! How many people are aware that the ostrich dips its head into the sand, and fancies itself concealed from view, and how few know that the marsh-crocodile buries its snout in the mud with an identical conviction ! In the same way there are painters of nearly every school who in some of their productions have fallen little short of those masters whom the world so idolizes, and whose best works perhaps even excel some left to us by first-rate artists. Bunyan's "Holy War," which Macaulay ranked as the second allegory in the language (the "Pilgrim's Progress"

being the first) illustrates it curiously enough. It is something surely to have been, in one walk of literature, best and second best. The readers of the "Arabian Nights" have heard of the Caliph Aaron the Righteous, and is he not the subject of a little poem by our late Laureate? But few are aware that he was succeeded by a son more enlightened than himself, and who lost his chance of living for ever because the most popular of Oriental story-books took his father for its hero instead of Al-Mamoun. An English translator was found in 1629 for a volume of ethics by one Leonard Marrande, and he expressed a hope that Marrande may prove a second Montaigne. But he has not. Proximity at a distance is not uncommon. Genius appears to be spasmodic and casual, rather than progressive, and is so, because you cannot by any possibility have a lineal succession of persons of supreme ability and endowments. Professionally speaking, all great men and women are childless. Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon, Shakespear, Bacon, Titian, Rubens, Rembrandt, Gainsborough, left no heirs. Is not the storm of 1703 the greatest which ever raged in the world, because a distinguished writer chose to make himself its historian? On the same principle, because the abominations of Sodom and Gomorrha are signalized in Scripture, the ordinary reader and worshipper, with the vaguest possible idea on the subject, concludes that this was some isolated atrocity, whereas the same story might be narrated of hundreds of ancient places situated on a rich and fruitful soil in a soft and voluptuous climate as is current about those two submerged, not burnt, cities of the plain. Nor is it usually made apparent that they were only two of five, which through the agency of some volcanic disturbance were buried under the brine.

Hargreaves invented the spinning-jenny, and did nothing else : yet he was a greater man than ——, who has written a round score of romances, and whose works have a shelf to themselves in every gentleman's library.

Harvey, Jenner, Arkwright, Newton, all these achieved one magnificent success, and stopped there. It was best that it should be so, that their fame might not be vulgarised. Bacon's name stands all the higher, perhaps, in popular estimation, because, with a very sparing knowledge of his miscellaneous works, ordinary readers vaguely associate it with some *Magnum Opus*, of which they have not read a line, and would not make out, if they did.

Does not the case stand very much the same (to speak candidly) with men such as Hobbes, Berkeley, Jeremy Taylor, and most of the great philosophers, great divines, great masters of statecraft, who form the Show Gallery of British Worthies, and whose merits the majority take very amiably on trust?

Harvey's opinions on anatomy have been superseded by Hunter's; but Hunter does not enjoy the immense advantage of having been the supposed discoverer of the circulation of the blood, or rather perhaps forsooth of acquiring the credit of having done so. Jenner would probably make a poor figure by the side of some of our living practitioners; but he will be remembered when they have been forgotten. Such is the difference between genius and experience; so much higher is the distinction of having done what nobody else could do, than that of doing what most people could do if they tried. Perchance one of the gravest cases of deferred recognition is that of Hobbes, a pupil of Bacon, yet a great and original writer, whose intellectual services have been appropriated by Locke.

It would be curious to ascertain how many, out of the vast numbers who have read "Gil Blas" with eager delight, could furnish on demand the name of the author; but certainly there are very few among the general body of the public, who are aware that a selection from the Works of Le Sage occupies fifteen octavo volumes. Perhaps it may be thought a little irregular and incorrect to quote Le Sage as a writer who has only done one thing, upon which the world has set the broad arrow of its approval; for look, it may be said, at his "Devil upon Two Sticks." Is not that reprinted and relished still? Why, yes, it steals into type every now and then, to be sure, and makes a sort of pretence to popularity. But the thing will not do; the world does not know anything about Monsieur Le Sage, and if there is any point in his "Diable Boiteux," it cannot see it. It has dwindled into a saying.

Le Sage appears to be essentially one of those who, after building up a literary reputation by other performances of no mean order of merit, crowned the edifice with a single grand triumph of art and skill which has distanced all that went before, and shut them out from the view of succeeding times. If he had not left that masterpiece to us, he must have been content with the rank of a voluminous French author above mediocrity. There is a feeling, which one has in reading "Gil Blas" and such works, or



(which is sometimes even better) in thinking about them; it is that one loses sight of the language in which the author wrote, and forgets, till one reflects, what countryman he was. Inferior writers are deficient in this catholicising faculty, and do not transmute themselves so readily into everybody's idiom.

Le Sage was at one time a French envoy to Madrid, and it has been alleged that he found in Spain the manuscript of the story of "Gil Blas" and destroyed it, when he had made what use he pleased of it. For the Spanish critics point out that the colouring and scenery are too locally exact to have proceeded from a French source. But this is, in the first place, a mere hypothesis, and, besides, rather an unhappy and illogical one. "Gil Blas" presents no trace of a Spanish germ, and there is nothing in it which a man of genius, who was acquainted with the country, might not very well have produced. The detractors of Le Sage have unconsciously added to his laurels. They have paid him a splendid compliment by instituting against him a charge of plagiarism of which the world still awaits the evidence, and in the absence of proof to the contrary, I think that it must be acknowledged that the Spaniards have so far been excelled by a gifted foreigner in painting the former manners and life of Spain. Le Sage has left us an admirably entertaining work, of which a fastidious judge can allege in disparagement only, that it is somewhat deficient in absolute variety of incident; it belongs to the same school as the "Contes d'Eutrapel," the Novels of Quevedo, the "English Rogue," and a score of other ingenious, but rather tiresome and monotonous compilations, except that it is provided with a real hero. The conception is as French as the treatment and the tone. Bystanders, it is said, see most of the game. Perhaps Cervantes might have made as good a thing of a story of personal adventure in Normandy, as the author of "Gil Blas" has of his in the Peninsula. We see almost more of those among whom we travel than of those among whom we live.

But surely Scarron supplies a second example from the same soil and era. Who reads anything but the "Roman Comique"? yet the author was an indefatigable scribbler of humorous ribaldry. All these social fictions represent a reaction from the romances of chivalry and the Platonic school, of which the former had been ridiculed in England before they were ridiculed in Spain.

Richardson basked in the sunshine of contemporary favour,

and could show letters from fair and fashionable correspondents, who thought him a finer writer than Fielding; but he is less recollected at this time of day, and if I were asked the reason, I should say it was because he has identified himself with nothing of sufficiently palpable and self-evident excellence to secure the coy and dull appreciation of the public. It asks more than a few pretty artifices of situation, to make up a world's book. Perhaps readers of Mr. Smiles will become of opinion that Richardson was almost greater as a man than as a writer. There was something really chivalrous in his ambition to be independent of all patronage, except that which he loved—the adoration of admiring ladies; and his kindness to Johnson in early days, how much does it not redeem? His personality overshadows his literary renown.

Cervantes and Boccaccio are both instances to the present point. What I mean by Cervantes and Boccaccio is “Don Quixote” and the “Decameron”; and the dilemma of English readers is, that neither is truly accessible in our language; the nearest approach to the former is perhaps the edition by Jarvis in quarto with those realistic illustrations. The “Persiles and Sigismunda,” the “Galatea,” the plays of the one, and the “Ameto,” the “Philocopo,” the “Fiammetta” of the other, are (in spite of the modern translations and Mr. Duffield’s encomium) sealed literature to the mass of us. Each of these writers is known by a single book; and we no more think of the former as a soldier who fought at Lepanto, than we do of Æschylus as one, who gained distinction at Marathon; but we allow him to pass as the pioneer in forcing out of public favour a stale type of romance, although he had been forestalled by the “Heroical Adventures of the Knight of the Sea,” published in England some years before. *That is a dead secret*, however. We subscribe to the reputation of Leonardo da Vinci as a painter, not as a die-sinker or an engineer, and of Montaigne as an essayist rather than as a soldier and man of business. We might take Ariosto, and apply the same argument to him. His own name and the title of his great poem are almost convertible terms. It was a saying of Lamb’s that by Locke was meant the “Essay on Human Understanding” (the author being *impersonal*, as it were): so, by Ariosto the only impression conveyed to nine minds out of ten is the “Orlando Furioso.” His portrait is not to be met with in print-sellers’ windows, and

if it were, it is so unlike our preconceived notion of the original, that hardly anybody would be found to accept it. It is only the other day that the painting by Titian was brought within reach, and hung in Trafalgar Square, to enable us to compare the man with his book, that is to say, if Ariosto it be.

Going still farther back, it is, sad to say, the case that many of the patristic and scholastic scribes have no standing-room to-day for more than their glorified nicknames. Those Irrefragable, Seraphical, Universal Doctors, what are they to us but shadowy, semi-mythical ideals?

Sterne, whose writings are allowed upon all sides to be excellent, but who appears himself to have been a cold-hearted egotist, and perhaps a little of the coxcomb into the bargain, is, as I take it, a synonym for "Tristram Shandy." Nobody thinks of looking into his Sermons; and his Letters are assuredly not popular reading. The "Sentimental Journey" has one good scene, that which the engraving has rendered so familiar. But it is, on the whole, a weak and fragmentary performance, and appears to owe its literary rank to the anxiety of the readers of "Tristram Shandy" to discover something like equal merit in other productions from the same hand.

But why should he have endeavoured to surpass himself—to be his own successful rival, like Bunyan? As it is, "Tristram Shandy" stands alone, and the author is made a perpetual freed-man of the Temple of Fame by virtue of it. If we were to have the faculty bestowed upon us of summoning the spirits of the departed, and holding parley with them, we should expect him to appear supported on either side by Corporal Trim and my Uncle Toby. Perhaps, in the background, a dress might seem to rustle, and a fair vision might flit indistinctly to and fro; it would be his and *our* Maria!

It is singular, when we consider it, how few have left more than one, or at the most two, productions, in which the world has consented to recognise a master's touch. It was of Goldsmith that it used to be rather too indulgently said: *Nullum (scribendi genus) tetigit quod non ornavit*; did he not improve Voltaire's *Homme à quarante écus* into the parson rich on forty pounds a year? and yet of all that Goldsmith did, his "Vicar of Wakefield," in spite of its constructive faults, is the only book which keeps its original verdure. We treat with comparative neglect even

that admirable thing of his, "The Citizen of the World," as if we shared the original publisher's distrust of it in declining to take the risk of bringing it out; for it may have appeared to be only an imitation of the numerous publications of the same class already in type—particularly the "Chinese Spy," and his poems (if they *are* poems) are applauded on demand. But the judicial redistribution of the poets and versifiers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is a task to be undertaken.

There is Andrew Marvell, formerly M.P. for Hull. He was a fine political character by all accounts, and if we are to believe the story of the Lord Treasurer seeking him in his own lodgings and trying without success to gain him over to the Court, we must give him credit for unusual integrity, although this anecdote, of all the unlikely things of the kind, seems almost to bear the palm. But, true or not, it is the *pièce de resistance*. Nine persons out of ten will tell you if you ask them who Marvell was, that he was this prodigiously upright individual, and will repeat the tale, believing it blacksmith-like. They probably will not be in possession of the fact that their hero was a poet, too; that his doings in that line were thought worth printing in his own day with somebody else's portrait, and (*mirabilis dictu*) republishing in ours. As a pamphleteer he did his measure of good, and his metrical doggerel is sometimes found of use to explain an obsolete allusion. But, in a public and general sense, his name is solely associated, and will be so for ever, with an incident which, if it really occurred, has an exceedingly apocryphal complexion.

Bishop Percy published a collection of Runic verses, translated Mallet's "Northern Antiquities," and was an extensive and accomplished letter-writer; all which might have gone for nothing, if he had not happened to present to the world a book which was the pioneer of all other books of the kind. He has left a work which lives and makes him live. He has merged his individuality in it. He and the "Reliques of Ancient English Poetry" are one and indivisible. So it will be before long, I predict, with Savage Landor, if it be not already the case, and I think I could give a reason or two if required, why the fusion of this author's personal identity with the "Imaginary Conversations" would hardly be a disadvantage to his fame.

It was not so much what Percy actually achieved, for he was, in sober truth, a careless and poorly-informed editor, as what his

example stimulated other and better men to do. He was the *primum mobile*, a very Dædalus of ballad-lore.

Fielding's "Tom Jones," which Gibbon pronounced a more enduring glory to the name of the writer than an imperial descent and an Earl's coronet, was a type once, whatever may be thought at the present day of that interesting hero of romance. We are afraid that his popularity has declined since he has become a "double-column" author. He is a writer whom I would rather not have complete. *Quod non opus est, asse carum*. His are not works to be taken "one with another," like wares in gross. His novels, bound in one volume, as well as his theatrical compositions, are nought to the generality, who only heard of "Tom Jones" before, and cannot put up with questionable language and morality in new acquaintances, not *viscé*d by fame and common report, just as we tolerate Boccaccio, and virtuously draw the line at the "Novellino" and the "Pecorone." Extracts from "Tom Jones" may be met with in specimens of English Prose-Writers, and favourite passages of it are quotable second-hand. "Tom Jones" is, in short, the book with which, and with which alone, the name and reputation of Fielding are popularly and familiarly associated. Whatever agencies combined may have built up that renown as we see it, "Tom Jones" holds the edifice together, and binds it; and it is a curious circumstance that the very name of the work was an afterthought. It had been intended, it seems, to call it "The History of a Foundling."

A reprint once in a century of the entire Works of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, is found to satisfy the demands of the curious and of literary inquiry; and yet there is one of these which is being multiplied incessantly in numberless copies. There is no need to force conclusions, where they come spontaneously. The truth in this case does not lurk at the bottom of a well. Swift succeeded, in one instance, in lifting himself and his pen above the hampering restraints of party feeling and contemporary sentiment, and produced a work, as a consequence, with which the public has been charmed ever since. One such triumph was sufficient. It was better for him and for us that there should not be two Gullivers; for if there had been, people might have been puzzled which to prefer, and have ended by going somewhere else for an idol! The Dean's Poems are not adapted for family reading; nor would it have been thought a safe experi-

ment to annex "The Tale of a Tub" and the "Directions for Servants" to the modern edition of Gulliver on imperial paper in crisp, new type! As far as the "Tale of a Tub" is concerned—by the way, it contains the germ of Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus," and was not itself original—there is one feature, which precluded it, from the first, from becoming really popular. It is an allegory, but not an allegory like Bunyan's. Its drift is political, and a powerful piece of writing as it unquestionably is, I fail to see in it anything which would be calculated to attract the unintellectual public. Swift's production is a piece of genuine literature, and Bunyan's is scarcely perhaps that. But the ordinary reader does not care a jot for literature. He only cares for what he can understand, which is little enough. Dr. Johnson, without knowing Swift's obligation, thought the "Tale of a Tub" too good for him. It, and the "Directions for Servants," and the "Gulliver"—alas! all were undisguised plagiarisms from satirical fictions in favour, before the good honest Dean was born.

Swift's admirers, if they are wise, will be content with the national reputation he enjoys on a single account, and if there is a faint notion in the popular mind that he did other things, let it rest there undisturbed! What mental torture, what agony of spirit, what posthumous obloquy, he might have been spared, if he could have lived and died an obscure country clergyman, of whom all that could be known was that he left to mankind a volume proof against death!

It may seem strange (with a spice of flippancy) to speak of identifying a man who wrote in his lifetime a cartload of books, with one particular book which, of all his productions, was perhaps not that most highly valued by himself and his contemporaries. But, nevertheless, if this is not pretty much as the case stands, at the present moment, with no less a person than Daniel Defoe, I gravely err.

The plain fact is, that out of all this wilderness of printed matter, "Robinson Crusoe" alone has not been *hustled* out of popular recollection by more modern names and more novel subject-matter. In his "Captain Carleton," his "Roxana," his "History of the Plague," and other pieces, which have sunk into neglect, there was, we are at liberty to infer, something, however little it might be, wanting to make the truth to Nature complete, something to render the illusion (so to speak) perfect, something

to constitute an homogeneous whole, which should fix the attention in perpetuity.

"Robinson Crusoe" breathes the air of general humanity, and it is immeasurably superior to Swift's "Gulliver"—the atmosphere is so much more pleasant and more generally relishable—almost sheds in fancy the scales of time. Yet a person whom Sir Richard Burton once met, asked him if he had ever in his travels come across Captain Gulliver. I try to read the "Waverley Novels," or at least some of them; but the effort is vain; the self-illusion is irrevocable; the magical staff is broken. How is it that I find the continuity of interest and beauty in "Crusoe" intact? Its scenes and characters are the things and persons themselves *photosculptured*, rather than *bas-relief* descriptions of them upon paper. It is a specimen of painting with pen and ink *ad vivum*. It is not a mere literary composition. The boy takes it up again when he has become a man, and enjoys it as he did at first. A great, though tacit tribute to its excellence lies in the fact that, of the millions who have devoured it with avidity, nobody probably ever dreamt of asking whether Crusoe's island was to be found in the map, and whether the author was right in his geography. Homer, just in the same way, depicted men, incidents, and places, so that it never suggests itself to us to ask how long ago they lived, or when they appeared, or how far off they are. Not one in a thousand could tell off-hand which lived first, Homer or Virgil; but everybody has an impression that they both lived a long while ago. Place Charles Lamb's version of the "Odyssey" before a schoolboy or a young lady at a boarding establishment, or even an ordinary reader, and they would not guess it older than Shakespeare, or so old as Spenser.

Most of the books which Defoe wrote, any clever man with a fair share of knowledge and invention and literary power, could have written as well; but to model and work out Crusoe, it demanded the hand of genius, as well as a freedom from convention and from petty self-complacency.

I apprehend that Herbert Spencer is at present identified in the public mind, so far as he is known at all, with a new or revised system of Biology and with nothing else except, which is more familiar perhaps, his painful sensitiveness to disturbing or distracting sounds and conventional talk. He so far comes

into my category, that he is a sort of personification of Biology, as the god Mars was of War. He has not the versatility or flexibility of Socrates or Æschylus, of Cervantes or Montaigne, and of others whom I have cited, and will the ethical studies of an irritable valetudinarian, as unfamiliar to his contemporaries as if he had taken up his abode in Laputa, serve him as a buoy?

Versatility is a quality which the moderns, at least, are rather apt to resent, since so few of them excel even in a single direction; and it taxes the memory to have for ever to bear in mind that certain persons shone in more than one way. Must Æschylus and Tyrtæus, Camoens and Calderon, claim our homage as military heroes as well as for their literary triumphs? Are we to pay tribute to Dante and to Petrarch in their diplomatic capacity? Will not Cervantes permit us to forget that he was a political critic, and lost an arm at Lepanto? There is the reverse of the medal, for the truly great survive in their greatness alone. Who dwells on the physical deficiencies of Agesilaus and Hannibal? Who weighs in the scales the foibles of Cæsar and Cicero? Who does not condone the faults of Alexander and Napoleon? Who would judge Sappho or Corinna as they would judge ordinary women? Time casts into its crucible the gross ore, and commits to oblivion the slender carnal residuum. Our terrestrial divinities are constellated abstractions.

We take our favourite classics, as we take our wives, for better, for worse. The authors are no longer at hand to execute the *corrigenda* of the reviewer. There is much among the remains of the ancient writers which might, no doubt, have been a good deal better, and there is many and many a passage and many and many a phrase for which a schoolboy would now be deemed entitled to a flogging, had not their labours long since entered the sacred and charmed pale of prescription.

Nevertheless it is doubtful, perhaps, whether all the erudition lavished by all the verbal and textual critics on our old poets and playwrights has sensibly augmented our enjoyment and admiration of their writings, and whether the endless recensions of the authors of the "Canterbury Tales," the "Faëry Queen," and other masterpieces of genius are not disagreeably tinged with academical pedantry and impertinence. I am thinking, not of the restoration of the sense, for which we cannot be too thankful, but of the amendment of the language. The great literary



luminaries of our country were already appreciated to as full an extent as now, I apprehend, speaking relatively, before their works fell under the scrutiny of the modern school of editor, and suffered the ordeal of the *Notæ Variorum*. The early English classics clearly owe the extension of their popularity to the men who first taught us to perceive and to love their intrinsic beauties, rather than to those, who substituted improved readings, and reformed the rhythm and punctuation. Our real benefactors in this way are not so much Steevens, Capell, Collier, Dyce, Morris, and the Reverend Professor Skeat, as Coleridge, Lamb, Hazlitt, Tieck, and Schlegel. Between the two classes of teachers and guides there is almost as great a difference as between a painter and a picture-frame maker.

The majority of us of the literary sort, at any rate, could be hereafter accommodated in a smaller compass, if we would agree to cast overboard some of our superfluous baggage; and how much our bookshelves would gain by relief from the voluminous performances of authors, whose writings are libraries in themselves. If Shakespear had left us half his plays and none of his poems, if Milton had done no more than compose "Comus" and one or two of his lyrics, if Defoe had stopped short at "Robinson Crusoe" and Dumas at "Monte Cristo" and "The Three Musketeers"; if, in short, three-fourths of our men of genius had been so self-denying as to sample their quality, the profit would have been mutual. Are not the "Canterbury Tales" sufficiently excellent to have secured to Chaucer the fame which he enjoys without the help of the rest? We may grasp Cæsar and Horace, Aulus Gellius and Athenæus, in their different ways; but we are apt to be bewildered by the voluminous bequest of Cicero. Before the invention of typography a man, when he set about winding up his affairs, might make a bonfire of as many of his MSS. as he pleased; but the printed book is beyond recall. It is an asset as imperishable as Matter.

The ultimate identification of anybody with a single achievement stands on quite different ground from specialism, conscious or otherwise. As a fowler has been said to be the wickeder the more dexterous he proves himself, so a specialist the truer he is to his pretensions, grows the narrower and for himself the less profitable. We are apt to rejoice in our delightfully *ex parte* fashion in those, who study for our benefit a particular subject, or who

exhaust a particular branch of inquiry; but to the individual this intellectual exercise necessarily and seriously cramps the life, which we have to live. The world admires the man or the woman who devotes a long career to the mastery of a few new points in science, ethics, or political economy; but it does not go so far as to regard the matter from the worker's own standing-point, who has usually sacrificed everything else to the accomplishment of one ruling object and ambition. Persons at once of wide and accurate culture are rare in the highest degree, and are more valuable to society even perhaps than the pure specialist; but the possessor of general information is a commoner type and a larger contributor to his own and his immediate friends' happiness.

It would be possible to point to many masterpieces in art and even in letters, which were more or less the result of personal incubation or intuition, and where the painter or artist lacked the fertilizing fruit of social contact and varied experience. But, on the contrary, living to oneself conduces to individuality and purity of type, and if as the consequence one leaves behind one products open to the charge of idiosyncrasy, they are, at least, one's own. The enlargement of intellectual vision can, after all, only be useful to ourselves and the world if it is eclectic, if the notions, which we gain here or there, pass through the crucible, become ours by collation and refinement. Otherwise the study and treatment of a topic by an exhaustive digest of all that has been written upon it lays us open to the danger of offering to the world a mingle-mangle, of turning oneself into a limited company.

The method of Shakespear—and an excellent one it was—was to note passages in a book, which struck him as worth use or storage, and then cast it aside. He found, perhaps, that the bulk of the literature, which fell in his way, was little more than an assortment of extracts or sentences in a framework of print.

In history, how many names there are, which seem to be indissolubly associated with a single circumstance? Think of Harold, the last of the Anglo-Danish kings! With what is he identified in our thoughts but with the loss of a great battle? We forget that his defeat in Sussex had been immediately preceded by as decisive a victory over the Danes in Yorkshire, and that he had barely had time to concentrate his forces on a new and remote point, when he found himself confronted with the

Normans. Even as it was, if Godwin's heir had been as prudent as he was brave, William the Conqueror might have died a Norman duke.

When we speculate on the great of bygone days, how little or how rarely we are accustomed to consider that such prominent and enduring historical characters as Alexander, Cleopatra, Hannibal, Jesus, bore names which were common in their age and country, but which have ceased to convey any meaning to us out of connection with a certain individual and a certain set of ideas, just as we seem to be acquainted with one Olympus alone out of six or seven, and with one Montaigne out of many, his very contemporaries. There have been many Hannibals in the world; it was a patronymic as familiar (comparatively) at Carthage as the most familiar patronymic among us; but in the world, as we know it, there is only one surviving. Our Cleopatra and our Alexander, again, were the third in order of descent and succession; but posterity does not inquire for Alexander I. or Alexander II., or for the first and second of the Cleópatras.

## XVI

### FORM

“And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”

THE Beautiful, the Good, and the Fit are in Nature synonymous. In Art they are to a certain extent. Hogarth held that beauty was variety; and he was very near to the truth. Beauty is utility and variety combined. The human form is of all forms the most beautiful, because it is at once the most useful and the most varied. In an abstract sense, there is no such independent quality as beauty; yet a conception of the beautiful is part of every man's moral construction, is an instinct as strong and subtle as the instinct which brings a duckling to the water.

The intimate association of proportion with fitness in all the natural objects surrounding us, which answer to our postulates of beauty, is exemplified by the choice of conditions under which creatures and things fulfil our technical and trained requirements. But although the whole may infinitely differ, its parts must be homogeneous and proper to the circumstances, as in normal poetical composition in prose or metre.

The external accessories of Nature are the gradual product of climate, diet, and habits, and we hardly know, perhaps, how far Art has educated the eye or how far Use is responsible for our opinions and doctrines in this direction. Local experience and convenience go very far indeed in the appreciation of Nature, in the evolutions of Art, and in the formation of what we call Taste; the practical element has its æsthetic side, and I am brought back to my starting-point, where I defined Beauty to be Utility combined with Variety.

The necessities of the case and the propriety of the entire costume have to be attentively studied. Any one, who is tolerably familiar with the precepts in Horace's "Art of Poetry," has graduated as a thinker on the broader subject before us. For the Poetry of Form in verse of the highest class is, as the Roman

bard maintains, analogous to that in Painting, and he might have added, in Architecture and nearly all other sciences, just as we recognize it throughout the economy of the universe. When one puts to oneself that such or such a matter pleases, it is another mode of saying that it complies with the obligations or exigencies of its place in Nature or even in artificial life. A race-horse and a cart-horse are equally beautiful, because they are severally adapted to the work which they have to do ; the former is valueless if it is placed in a brewer's dray, just as the latter would be on Epsom downs ; and it is much the same with a greyhound and a bulldog. In these and similar instances it is the sense of utility and the effect of custom which produce the feeling which we have about them. There are many who would recognize in the bulldog attractions superior to any in the other species. I once knew a lady who christened hers Venus, and allowed it to sleep on her bed. Society has applied them both, however, to certain purposes, and the more exactly they discharge their appointed functions, the fairer they seem—the fairer, because the fitter. We notice, on the one hand, the relatively enormous spread of wing in a condor and a gull, because they have to traverse wide expanses of water devoid of resting-places, and on the other the two *genera* of apteryx, which have lost those lateral appliances through desuetude. Look, again, at a Skye terrier or a long-furred cat ; they are alike indigenous to cold regions, and we Britons, as inhabitants of a somewhat bleak climate, sympathize with these features, and characterize them as beauties, where the natives of a torrid country might take an opposite view.

An analogous law and principle govern our ideas respecting Painting and Architecture. The arch of a bridge, the spire of a church, the keel of a boat—they all awaken in us a sense of the Useful and the Appropriate, and secondarily of the Beautiful. Every church symbolizes in its body or nave the Ship of Safeguard and Salvation, in its tower the seat or basement of strength, and in its steeple the heavenward up-look ; transpose or change any of these, and the meaning is lost. If we regard a suspension bridge, one leaning on pillars, or one composed of tubes, we miss something ; yet it is an useful structure, and well adapted to the immediate object. But, geometrically and theoretically considered, it is a failure ; instead of horizontal lines, we have curved ones. The former may be convenient ; but they do not satisfy the eye.

It is merely a rude apparatus for crossing a river or a valley ; it is a nondescript, an abortion. A line of planks resting on tubs, if they were strong enough, would be equally beautiful.

Beauty does not abstractly consist in regularity or in irregularity of outline, which are purely relative and subsidiary terms, as we have only to turn our thought to a bank of clouds, a group of rocks, the sinuosities of a stream, to perceive and allow ; and the other side of the argument is illustrated by the absence of poetry in numberless common objects, which answer the description of utility without exhibiting the other needed characteristic. It is only to take a survey of our environments to convince us that this is so. Take for example a carpenter's rule, a rectangular grass-plot, a railway signal, or the intellect of an average human individual ; there is no scope or leverage for the imaginative faculty, no linear play agreeable to trained or educated impressions ; these are mechanical appliances or vehicles—monochords. A pollard tree and a bush distorted into some fantastic and bizarre shape are outcasts from Nature and heresies in Art ; they appear to disobey the laws of utility, convenience, and variety in almost equal degrees.

There are some things which appear to be falsely comprised within the Poetry of Form, or at least not properly to belong to it. The flourishes in a copy-book possess no beauty ; they are nothing more than lines on a plane. There is no beauty, technically speaking, in a peacock's tail ; it is merely a very excellent machinery for the display of colour. Beauty considerably depends on what is commonly called the language of expression, on a species of intellectual telegraphy, which may be felt and comprehended, but is neither visible nor palpable ; and mathematical science is merely the outward expression of our inborn sense of aptitude and propriety. There is a mathematical germ in the brains alike of us and other animals. Human appliances for mensuration are modern conveniences. Our brains with their infinite diversity of character and power subsist on our physical systems, and govern their sources of supply and support. We owe to them our faculties of sight, hearing, smell, for which our eyes, ears, and noses are merely subsidiary *media*. The eye is a mechanical apparatus for the measurement of distances and proportions, and secondarily an object of beauty, provided that it is perfect in all its parts, and from its peculiar organism a vehicle

of language for the brain. It is in its dualism the external concentrating agency for intellectual expression.

The nose seems concurrently to assist in fixing thought, and regulating and balancing the visual focus, and offers a signal refinement of the corresponding organ in animals. The human nose, subject to numerous variations of detail, is capable of becoming a contributor to personal character and beauty, and it is hard to conceive what could take its place on the score of utility and crowning fitness. We have often heard that Napoleon laid stress on the nasal conformation of his lieutenants, recognising there a symptom and guarantee of capacity. This element in form may or may not have grown indispensable from immemorial habit and familiarity. We can hardly tell whether it would be welcomed, were it introducible as a structural innovation, or what is the precise history of its reduction to its finite type in man.

It is as difficult to define by what rules beauty is to be ascertained, as it is to say with absolute precision what beauty is. Yet beauty, if, on the one hand, it is not a matter of rule, is, on the other, scarcely a matter of opinion—farther, at any rate, than inasmuch as opinion itself, to be good for anything, must be built on premises.

Man is the most beautiful work of the Creator, for there is nothing essential in any other being of cognate species which is not (with improvements) in us, and which does not furnish an example of typical elevation under favourable conditions.

The pure and undegraded human form supplies us with a satisfactory solution of the problem of accomplishing with the smallest means the largest results; of embracing within the compass of as few lines as possible the whole vocabulary of expression. The brain itself, pure and simple, is a sphere, for instance; the shape which, above all others, is capable of containing in proportion the greatest quantity of matter. The addition of the face and other accessories reduces it to a spheroid.

The sinews of a man are the leverage of his whole frame. If the man has bones too large and weighty for his frame, the power of leverage becomes inadequate. It is a common mistake to suppose that largeness of bone implies strength; it only does so where the osseous formation is in exact proportion to the muscular formation. Where a man's bones are of unusual dimensions, unless it happens that the muscular development strictly accords,

the man is too big for the earth he lives in. It might not be so if the powerful gravitation in the latter did not exist, or did not exist in an equal degree.

Many have questioned the utility of the presence of a nipple in man, and consequently its beauty and its goodness; whereas, in point of fact, all these features are in it as admirably conspicuous and as marvellously combined as in any other part of our structure. The nipple is the keystone of our physical well-being. In either sex (with a difference) it centralizes and localizes our affections, as the marvellous sexual organism and energy more immediately serving our renewal and succession punctuates our instinctive desires.

It has been said that of all forms the human is the most beautiful, because it exhibits the greatest variety and the largest share of usefulness. Take a snake for instance. A snake is a most remarkable illustration of Nature's endowments; but in a snake there is not a thousandth part of the variety which exists in the body of a man. In the latter no two inches resemble one another exactly; the variations and the differences in the veins, the muscles, the curves and lines, are numberless, though often infinitesimally minute. A serpent, on the contrary, is a simple curve; its physical structure is neither elaborate nor complex.

A racing horse is constructed so as to move in his own plane. He has no lateral power. His hoofs are almost flush to the ground. The greyhound moves similarly in his plane; and so long as he chases a hare in a straight line, it is all very well; but directly Puss doubles, the greyhound is at fault. He has to rein up, and recommence. This comes of the want of lateral power. So it is in the rhinoceros and the elephant; but in them, again, from a slightly different cause, the superabundance of dead weight, the apparently undue preponderance of hide and bone. By a sort of natural provision those large and ponderous quadrupeds enjoy an abnormal swiftness of motion under restrictions which form a safeguard to others.

The racer is all sinew, and that sinew as hard as iron. He has no dead weight. He is formed by Nature to describe a straight line, that is to say, to go from point to point, covering the narrowest possible extent of ground on the way; he is calculated for speed rather than for strength, yet the famous *Eclipse* is reported to have been of a coarse and large frame,



## FORM

similar to what one conceives the *Bucephalus* of Alexander to have been. A greyhound, when at full speed, almost runs. So does a hare. A stag can only bound. The elephant and rhinoceros trot only. These have their immense dead weight to carry, and no lateral power with it; and perhaps, after all, the velocity of a rhinoceros is one of the wonders of natural history.

We see a striking illustration of the wise thrift of Nature in one of the least interesting and least progressive of human bipeds—the Government clerk. He makes it, as a rule, the sole function of his body to carry his head to office every morning, and to carry it back home in the evening. He gradually finds that he is incapable of any larger exertion. Nature withdraws her gifts, when she finds that they are misused or unemployed, as we find in the case of the blind cave-fish of Kentucky, in the lost toes of the horse, and in the feet of the primæval whale. So, too, as Boswell tells us, even Rorie More's immediate descendants could not bend his bow, nor wield his claymore, because habits of life in the Highlands had changed for better or worse. Official crassitude is the true Illimitable: the fathomless ocean is less fathomless.

Sinuosity in itself may very well be absolutely prosaic. The windings of a river do not independently please or rivet the eye; it is the surrounding landscape, of which the river is only a component feature. What can be meaner or less imaginative than a modern street, tortuous or zigzag, with its geometrical perspective of stereotyped pagan buildings? But, on the contrary, the broken, rugged outlines which present themselves in the thoroughfares of an ancient city, take the fancy captive. Their irregularity is awake with feeling and beauty, for it is not the irregularity of a corkscrew or a scimitar. It comes nearer to the unequal extensions and angles which we are accustomed to see and love in cloud and wave forms. No cloud is exactly the duplicate of another. Although there is an orderly sequence in the gradation of volume and force, no wave exactly resembles that which preceded it or that which follows it.

The beauties of leaf and flower form are inexhaustible, and we turn to them again and again with pleasure and profit, more especially, perhaps, after casting a doubtful eye over our own attempts to reproduce them. It was usual enough formerly to see objects on canvas, of which the counterparts were hardly to

be found in Nature ; but the realistic school of drawing came in, and changed all that. This new departure in Art, suggested by the Dutch or Flemish school perhaps, and hand in hand with the Crabbe school of poetry, was founded on a mistaken theory. It discarded the vital principle of selection, and portrayed men and things as they are in actual life. Pheidias copied Nature, but copied selected types or a selection of types, just as Zeuxis delineated Helen of Troy from five of the fairest virgins of Crotona. It is impossible to deny that such pictures as those in the Wierx Museum at Brussels—the mother with her burned child, the suicide, and so forth, are vividly true and faultlessly exact, yet by the same token they are gross realistic transfers, not evolutionary studies. So it is with the hackneys, who do nothing all their lives but copy pictures on commission. There used in my time to be a man without arms in the Brussels Gallery, who painted with his feet ! These replicas are often absolute facsimiles, yet they are as far from resembling the original as a shilling is from resembling a sovereign. A person so engaged may even understand anatomy and the mechanical laws of painting, and yet fail in producing a picture, because he is incapable of bestowing on it colour, light, and tone—attributes in which the artist himself entered into partnership with Nature and Time ; and, even from a merely technical point of view, how can the producer at second hand catch the original sight ? One of the earliest compositions of the so-termed Pre-Raphaelite school was a picture of an omnibus with thirteen passengers inside. It was an indifferently good copy of the original ; but it was not Art, and might just as well have been let alone. One might with equal propriety and success make an unsophisticated representation of a hoarding with advertisements, a hansom cab, or a *table d'hôte*. A casual or mechanical aggregation of flowers and trees is not a garden which, before it can deserve such a name, has to comply with certain postulates of contour and colour. In domestic architecture we often encounter houses of elegant construction and of what is called gentlemanly character. Nothing is to be objected to them—to their style, elevation, or embellishment, yet there is something deficient—the force of thoughtful sentiment, the charm of symmetry, the genius of a controlling mind. The colossal style forms still another way, in which Art possesses the power of tyrannising over Nature. The ancients, however, as a rule,

## FORM

contented themselves with erecting gigantic memorials to divinities and equally fabulous heroes, whose moral and physical qualities they thus placed on a par. There was so far no indecorum in raising statues fifty feet in height to Pallas Athenai or Jupiter Capitolinus. But it was reserved for modern taste to personify the Duke of Wellington as Ajax. Yet the monument in Hyde Park is not impossibly as good a resemblance of one hero as the other.

The colossal style and treatment in sculpture and statuary may be allowed to fall within the present range, inasmuch as they symbolize and deify our qualities and virtues. Those grand Babylonian and Assyrian monuments in our museums, executed on a scale, which violated natural propriety, were figurative extensions of actual or supposed realities; and the winged bulls, lions, and boars, and Mercuries and Cupids, typified human attributes under animistic shapes. Objects of commanding proportions appealed to ages destitute of culture and letters. The incised slabs and other remains, which have reached us from those nations, which were the cradle of art and invention, were intelligible to millions, who lived and died without beholding a book or acquiring the alphabet of learning, just as, at an infinitely later epoch, a Venetian, who could not spell his own name, was keenly and proudly conscious of the significance of the winged lion of St. Mark. A transition from the pagan to the Christian mythology procured admission for the winged angels and archangels of the new system, who superseded some of the winged divinities of the older creed; and, apart from theological considerations, we must allow a certain fitness in the idea, if we draw a line at the winged crucifix of the Romanist. But a similar concession cannot be made in the case of that stupendous abortion in one of our public parks, where a distinguished English soldier of diminutive proportions assumes the stature and costume of an ancient Greek warrior. The Assyrians and other ancient peoples may well be excused for having regarded with reverential awe the impressive representations of their gods or their heroes, and for having believed that they were accurate portraits. But even persons of moderate intelligence had in 1822 arrived at the knowledge that no two individuals were ever more dissimilar than Ajax or Achilles and Field-Marshal the Duke of Wellington. O women of England! why did you do it? The statue is not indecent

because it is nude, but because it is an anachronism and a falsehood.

A leading office of Art is to preserve for future reference types which are valuable and not enduring.

Even a cursory study of the schools of painting in our own national collection suggests a pervading deficiency amounting to a violence to poetry in all such works, or nearly so, as are made up of many component parts, which severally demand the eye and hand of a specialist. If one investigates the details, one distinguishes the point or points in which the painter excelled, and readily observes that the remainder is of a quality, which, taking the most favourable view of it, throws the central feature into disproportionate relief, or perhaps we have a colourist, whose fine tints and shadows distract our attention from his faulty drawing or perspective. Nor is the co-operative plan in painting more successful than in literature—the plan, where one man selects the share of the canvas, which is his peculiar strength, and his coadjutor or coadjutors do the same. The homogeneity of manner and treatment is bound to suffer; but the alternative is as unfortunate as it is frequent. It is a common experience to hear a picture described as a fine bit of colour, or as presenting a remarkably well-executed figure of a person or an animal; and this is because an ensemble of uniform power and truth is so difficult and so rare. As a rule, the subsidiary features are less masterfully filled in, like the background to a portrait or a miniature, or again, as in a play, written for one actor, where the rest of the cast are supernumerary foils. The exceptions are, where the effect has to be taken as a whole, and you have to view the object at a distance regulated by the conditions of size and treatment.

Literature has its form as well as Art. Of this Horace was perhaps the first to make us aware in his Epistle to the Pisos. The work of a man on paper must exhibit justness of proportion, no less than his work on canvas or in marble. He has to graduate his treatment and adjust his touch to the subject before him. An essay may have its lights and shadows, its tone and colour, as a painting has—even its relief, like a piece of sculpture. In criticism the author has to study with especial care the finer lines equally with the artist.

A literary performance may be considered in the same light as any other work of art; but few books realize the demands

necessary to constitute them such; and an influential cause, if not on the whole the most influential, is the prevailing poverty of form, or, as we more usually say, style. Form in writing, like taste in judging, is perhaps a matter of instinct and genius rather than of training or education. The majority of us discern this valuable quality, when we have the opportunity, yet how few can tell whence it proceeds or to what it is due, and how far fewer are capable of even distantly imitating what they thus have under their eyes! Books are seldom artistic, because, in order that they may be so, they have to satisfy the twofold postulate of excellence of matter and manner, as a painting is not a masterpiece, because it presents one or two fine features, but because it is perfect in all its parts.

In regard to the principle of selection, its essential value is not uniform from the point of view of an artist, because the same rules do not govern portrait and landscape. In representing an individual, whether it be a human being or an animal, it is necessary to secure an average or happy expression and pose; but in reproducing Nature, so far as it is reproducible at all, there may be said to be at all times a ready-made selection, and the fit material for a canvas. Men and women, and the inferior creatures, are more difficult to realize, because the expression and attitude are prone to artificial and wilful change; but in Nature there is no grimace, and the main problem is to catch a piece of scenery before it undergoes normal modification.

There is an exhaustive monograph dealing with Napoleon from the point of view of that great man's personal aspect under all known or possible circumstances, and even in the shape of caricature. It is detestable—the farthest imaginable thing from a select typical representation of the Emperor at different ages and in scenes consecrated by time and opinion. Two or three likenesses, of which I can think, are worth a whole lumber-room in book-form like this egregious publication, which so signally violates the ancient principle, recognised by the Persians and the Greeks, of discarding what is exaggerated and grotesque. The caricatures of Napoleon I should commit to the clemency of the common hangman with their authors. Such distortions of history and fact are solely endurable, when, as in ancient examples, they casually illustrate something of which all other record has disappeared.

The late Mr. Ruskin was a grave offender against the true principles of selection and survival. He not only suffered some one to reprint his juvenile verses, which in their original shape might have been viewed as a curiosity, but in the new editions of his more important labours he actually committed the misdemeanour of preserving passages condemned by his own judgment, apparently because he was reluctant to surrender the admittedly worthless matter, and because, again, the course enabled him to bespatter himself with a measure of abuse, which his critics would have hesitated to inflict. He must keep the old sentence in type; but he guards against the supposition that he did not know better, when he grew older, by adding parenthetically, "What a fool I was to say that!" The worse folly strikes one as lying in the morbid and miserable egotism of perpetuating ignorances and errors.

That the believers in phrenology are not so numerous as they used to be, we ought scarcely to feel either surprise or regret. The craniologists are to be answered with their own answers, to be fought on their own field, to be confuted on their own premises. They tell you that such an one has the bump of perseverance, as if perseverance were an abstract virtue. They confound the effect with the cause. A man is an orator, because he has a full, strong, keen eye. He has not such an eye, because he happens to be an orator.

I have thought that the eye has often much to do with a man's success as a speaker, because I have argued with myself that on the contrary a man with weak sight has the most serious difficulty to overcome, before he achieves success in this direction, if he achieves it at all.

It may be cited as one of the cases in which physics contradict phrenology that, whereas the latter places the bump of courage behind the ear, the truth is, that the exhibition of unusual development in that locality simply signifies the presence of extraordinary leverage. Here again the cause is mistaken for the effect.

The laws of perspective have been rather too sparingly studied by many of our artists down to comparatively recent times. What is known as binocular perspective affects the perpendicular lines, and not the horizontal. Those, who have most appreciated the genius of Turner as a painter of landscapes, do not seem to

## FORM

have explained the real source of his artistic triumphs, or to have perfectly understood the character of his powers. He did not owe his celebrity and progress in his profession to his mastery of drawing; for his knowledge of drawing was very imperfect. The secret of his success was his perception and perfect command of binocular effect and stereoscopic perspective. Subsequently to his complete surrender to the principles of binocular effect, he may be almost said not to have drawn a line which was true to Art. At the same time, the subjects which Turner delighted to represent, were especially such as are trying to the skill and reputation of an artist. The aspect of a storm at sea, the sunshine on a snow-capped peak, the morning-mist on a lofty mountain range, are changing from moment to moment. Look at the difference between a fine building and the noblest attempt to delineate it, between a defile of the Alps and a picture of it by Turner or any one else? The student of form and light knows perfectly well that they are to be sought in their own homes, and there we have to leave them behind us till we can return again some day to refresh our recollection.

The changes in atmospheric or aerial appearances, again, are so rapid, so wonderful, and so various, that no combination can well be treated as impossible; and one feels glad, that Ruskin accorded to so careful an observer as Turner the credit of having been true to Nature, even when his sky effects in some landscape were, in the view of the critic, barely probable.

Claude Lorraine, with all the eye of Turner for perspective, was more careful in treatment and in details. What Turner accomplished by dashes of the brush, Claude accomplished by thin lines. Claude's aerial and rectilinear perspective is superior to his foreshortenings and horizontal perspective. In a picture, where the elbow is lifted higher than the shoulder, so as to leave only the deltoid visible, the foreshortening process peculiarly tests an artist's capability; and its faultiness is as frequent as it is serious. As some indication how imperfectly perspective and foreshortening were understood by some of our greatest masters, we may refer to the colossal equestrian portrait of Charles I., by Vandyke, in the National Gallery; the horse has been worse treated than its rider; but the art of animal-painting among modern nations came late; it asked centuries to enable us to produce the figure of any quadruped worthy of being placed

side by side with an example of ancient Greek sculpture or engraving.

The three following positions strike me as being defensible. (1) Every picture has a vanishing point within its own plane. (2) A picture must be false from every point except the point from which it was painted. (3) The first principles of painting, of which an intimate acquaintance with the physiology of the eye forms perhaps the most important, are not uncommonly those which artists acquire last.

The advantages which the old masters had in the study of the nude figure were incomparably greater than those which have been enjoyed by modern painters and sculptors. It would be a grave error to suppose that the present system of working from hired models is a full equivalent or substitute for the habitual familiarity of the eye with the body in its natural state. The men and women who attend at our academies are as different from those who passed daily under the notice of Phidias and Lysippus as a tiger in its native jungle is from a tiger in a travelling circus. The classical treatment of subjects is apt to be imperfect and unsatisfactory, for the simple reason that the sculptor or painter has no longer the opportunities which the ancients possessed in unstinted abundance. The athletic games, the sports, and the public spectacles, throughout Italy, Greece, and other parts of the world, were the schools in which Praxiteles and Zeuxis acquired that outline and form, which have never been surpassed, and which we are probably never to see approached again.

In Athens, Sparta, and Rome, the exposure of the naked figure was not viewed in the light in which we view it. The manners of those States permitted any one, who had chosen painting or sculpture as his profession, to take without impediment or offence, as the subjects of his brush or his chisel, the finest examples of beauty, both male and female, from among the gladiators and the slaves; and to this cause the heathen mythology may owe some of its grandeur in its fine personifications of the Virtues and Vices. But, at the same time, mythology had its pure and its depraved types, which seem scarcely to have been distinguished with sufficient care by the writers on the subject. For the appreciation of the Nude is dependent on the whole surrounding costume and intellectual bias. There is a



possibility of comprehending social conditions, under which it might be held indecorous to be clothed.

Even in the painting by Rubens, called "The Judgment of Paris," at the National Gallery, it is easy to perceive, in place of the ideal elevation of tone, for which we might have looked in two, at least, of the figures, a certain sensual blowsiness which is apt to disappoint and offend the taste. Rubens, instead of reproducing, by a sort of inductive process, three selected types of natural womanhood, beckoned three bonny damsels out of the market-place, and made them serve his turn. He succeeded better than Reynolds did in similar attempts; but he arrived at his result by a very different method from that pursued by Zeuxis. Hence we get a purely conventional and literal treatment of a purely mythological subject. It may be a triumph of art; but the art, as you can see, has been hampered and alloyed by the conditions of modern society.

Still, whatever its shortcomings as a classical performance may be, this picture, with its voluptuous outlines and its enamouring flesh-tints, no doubt is a vivid facsimile of three Antwerp belles of the day in perfectly classical *déshabillé*.

The difference between the old masters and Sir Joshua Reynolds and his school was that they painted men and women, and Reynolds and the moderns, ladies and gentlemen. That Reynolds himself was a man of genius, everybody knows; but he was very far indeed from being a man of first-class powers. He was emphatically a portrait-painter, and his portraits are delightful examples of ease and finish. At the same time, they are portraits and nothing else. Take his "Three Graces"—they are merely three likenesses of fine ladies of the day on one canvas, with all the airs and simpers of high life imported into the scene. Put the work between the "Judgment of Paris" by Rubens (faulty as it may be) and Domenichino's "Venus attired by the Graces," not for the sake of instituting a severely critical comparison, which would be out of the question, but only to shew, for a moment, the different handling of a great subject! The mistake which Reynolds made was that he entered on a branch of the art for which he had no feeling, and in which he had no chance of attaining even so much as mediocrity. Say that the name was ill-chosen? It signifies nothing. Let us suppose that it had been catalogued as "Three Court Beauties" or "Three Ladies in

Waiting"; we should still be able to demonstrate that Reynolds knew as little of the poetry of form as Turner knew of the elements of drawing. His three goddesses, or whatever we are to call them, are like the figures in a *papier-mâché* landscape or on a Chinese screen.

Lamb, in his paper entitled "The Reynolds Gallery," illustrates this position very powerfully. Lamb perceived the result. But he does not name the cause.

This element in our appreciation of writers goes back as far as literature itself goes. There have always been two classes of authors, of which one conspicuously shines from its homage to style concurrently with its observance of matter. Among the more familiar illustrations of this truth are the noble periods of Cicero, the delicate and skilful touches of Horace, the impressive terseness in different ways (as was to be looked for) of Sallust and Quintilian, the exquisite diction of Tacitus in his "Life of Agricola." All these, and many other, masterpieces are merely in a chronological sense ancient; substantially they are contemporary. And in another way, in contemplating the writers of antiquity, I fear that we are too prone to overlook the immense debt, which we owe to them for our actual wealth of language, how weighty our obligation is to pagan myth and custom for the extension of our thought and the refinement of our diction.

In poetry itself, where metre is employed, beauty of form is almost limited to grace and propriety of versification and rhythm. But beauty may reside in poetry unaccompanied by these two adjuncts. The *musa pedestris* has accomplished greater results through some of our prose-writers in the way of true poetical art and symmetry than a sensible proportion of our versifiers.

Insufficient distinction has perhaps been drawn between poetry and poetical form, and we are apt to think of Pope and Goldsmith as poets, as we do of Chaucer and Spenser, Tennyson and Swinburne. But, at any rate, the graceful or stately structure, the speciously majestic period, may exist without the deep and subtle inner sense, even though it resembles a fine and fair woman deficient in corresponding mental accomplishments. There are cases, where the metric cast of a work seems neither here nor there. Might not much of Wordsworth and Browning, Coleridge and Southey, be just as well printed as prose—and fairly commonplace prose some of it would be, too.

There are such universally acknowledged masterpieces in their several ways as the "Arabian Nights," the "Decameron," and the "Canterbury Tales," three splendid pieces of invention, of which the origin is commonly supposed to be that which the excellent authors allege. Yet can anything be more unlikely? Imagine to yourselves an Oriental despot patiently listening for two or three years without interruption to a series of stories, of which the sole proximate object is to thwart him in his despotism! Boccaccio, the merchant and man of business, who found time to follow an innate literary bent, and to give his friends and the world in reversion many books, of which the reversioners, for the most part, know only one, feigned that ten gentlemen and ladies under circumstances of acute distress and anxiety narrated during ten days a story a-piece—ten stories a day—to divert their minds from the horrors of the Black Death, which was at that time desolating Italy. Then, again, the author of the "Canterbury Tales," also primarily associated in his own day with the management of affairs and the life of Courts, desires us to believe that a series of not very brief stories was recounted in succession by a party of pilgrims as they rode to Canterbury on horseback. In all three instances we perceive that the premises are not less fictitious than the rest; but they are, moreover, almost, as one is apt to imagine, unnecessarily and tiresomely improbable, and offer violence to the principle of fitness. As the matter stands, it does not so greatly signify, for we take these glorious and immortal gifts as we find them, and dispense with their letters of introduction.

## XVII

### WRITING AND PAINTING

"The two portraits which Sir Joshua Reynolds has lately painted of Mr. William Windham, of Norfolk, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, are so like the originals that they seem almost alive, and ready to speak to you."—*Muloniana*.

MEN with the pen-and-ink faculty truly developed in them, and yielding visible fruit, have been of incalculable service to us. We owe these artists in a certain branch of limning very cordial thanks indeed for what they are accomplishing, and for what they have already accomplished. Our obligations are certainly very great, and we are incessantly recognising them. We do not allow these gentlemen, if they would, to lie in ignorance of our sense, that they are among our most essential well-doers, even although we may be aware that the entire fabric of literature is a sequel and monument to the fallen state of Man. Like the honey out of the lion's carcase, out of our sins and out of our deformity have come all that seems to our corrupt nature most excellent in books and most beautiful, nay, most chaste, in art.

It is a faculty which is pretty widely disseminated by this time. It has reached even those who are ignorant of the higher uses of the goose and the cuttlefish, to whom the fame of paper has not yet travelled.

The benighted Homo-Hottentot strains his lean wits to contrive a method of passing on to the next age those thoughts which, in his rude conceit, deserve to live after him. He carves them with uncouth implements on the hides of beasts. The irresistible itch of authorship seizes him. It is as if it were some occult titillation which attacks the very blackest and savagest blood—blood of Crow-Indian, of Esquimaux, of dweller in distant Fiji.

The man who invented writing was more important to us just in one degree than the man who invented types. The latter was palpably a discoverer of the second magnitude; for he had his cue, his starting-point, given him. A poem may be scratched on a scrap of dried elephant's trunk or on a dragon's intestine.

A letter, traced by a Hindoo rice-eater on a palm-leaf with a paint-brush, has an eloquence for those who are in the secret. Writing was one of those matters, I apprehend, which engaged the most anxious attention of curious minds at the most remote date, when palæography was not yet in the stage even of hieroglyphical symbols on slabs or cylinders of clay. There must have been a fair number of Jews after the Exodus who could write some kind of a hand and make themselves useful as scribes to great men; the latter probably resembled our great men in former days, who wrote rather worse than bellows-menders and bricklayers do now, but who were none the less great for that circumstance. The pen-and-ink faculty has sometimes been strongly present with persons, whom unfriendly chance has temporarily debarred from pen and ink. Men and women in captivity have told in elder days their sorrows, and even left behind them their testamentary instructions, for lack of better tools to work with, and of merrier work to do, on window-pane and prison-wall with diamond or with nail—even, like Casanova, with mulberry juice and the little finger as a pen.

This literature, printed and written, may, at a rough guess, already amount to a few million cart-loads altogether. No human intellect is equal to a calculation of the precise quantity. A plummet let scientifically down might be expected to bottom in about ten thousand fathom books. What a deluge of dry goods! What a flood, incapable of being drained off, incurable by sewage! It will fill the land and the waters. It will reach higher up than Pelion piled on Ossa by-and-by. For it goes on multiplying without cessation. We see these books grow day by day, and England contains a certain number of square acres, and no more. It is a large problem, with which the nation will find itself having to deal. It may come on for settlement before many, who peruse these lines, are old men and women. It will eclipse all other problems in importance and interest.

It can be made to appear to everybody's satisfaction that Chaucer wrote a book called "Canterbury Tales" without the least assistance from canvas or oils, yet not so bad a picture of the English life and manners of the era, when it was done. Item, that the same composed sundry other treatises, in all of which there is wealth of colouring and vividness of portraiture, yet never a pencil nor a brush used. Here was a master-draughts-

man, then, with no utensil save his quill, and a magnificent benefactor to native letters; with a name and fame high enough to redeem from combustion, decoction, or other exterminating process a whole bed of minnows. A representative man, and in his faculty a giant; a type, of which there was scarce more than one example, himself alone; a chieftain among authors, if not precisely, as he has so often been termed, "a well of English undefiled," an unlucky phrase first used by the author of the "Faëry Queen" in a rather lame passage, as it might have been thought to be, had a meaner man penned it.

Spenser, inventor of the "Shepherd's Calendar" and the "Faëry Queen," came after him with more polished measures and statelier themes—Spenser, a limner and a colourist also by dint of penmanship—*per meram plumam*—more voluptuous in his pen-and-ink pictures, more gorgeously and sensuously descriptive, a more modern mind and mind's eye; but still in genius far indeed from being the other's peer.

Then Shakespear left behind him an everlasting and exuberant Horn of Plenty, in which we go shares with all men. This great trinity falls under my subject in a twofold sort of way, because they were all three at once authors and painters—their own illustrators, on whom no one else can improve, whom many enough have done their best to disfigure, if not affront, by graphic accessions jarring against our sense of harmony at every step.

Milton was a little child when Shakespear died, not an old man. A grand and pure mind, a superb and chastened intellect, a holier Muse. He invoked not the classic sisterhood, but the heavenly maid

"That on the secret top  
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, did'st inspire  
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,  
In the beginning, how the heavens and earth  
Rose out of chaos"—

and who loved, perhaps, though the poet wist not, to wander  
"on Sion's hill, or by Siloa's brook"

"That flow'd  
Fast by the oracle of God."

But in Milton English life was not painted in anything coming near to the extent and degree that it had been in Chaucer, in

Spenser, and in Shakespear. His subject was too large to bear well a colouring and tone so local.

The creator of "Paradise Lost" was midway (or about) between Chaucer and Wordsworth; but between Milton and Wordsworth were Dryden and Pope. Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespear, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Byron, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Swinburne, these have been the stepping-stones from age on to age—a linked chain carrying down and preserving for ever the sovereignty of intellect in the domain of the Muses.

Our literature, as all literatures must be, is divided unequally between the writers of verse and the writers of prose. There have been few who excelled in both, or who, excellent in one, were more than brilliant in the other. Chaucer wrote some prose pieces, but had he not given us those immortal Tales, had he not been above all the Bard, he would have been for us something of an *Umbra*, no better than another Occleve, or second only, perhaps, to Gower.

Who has read Spenser's "History of Ireland"? It would be new to the majority that there was a "History of Britain" extant from the pen of Milton; and all that we see in "Lycidas"—even in that, are a few lines: the peroration is a fatal blemish. Dryden's prose works are neglected. How few have made acquaintance with his noble character of Shakespear?

On the other side, Bacon's verses are (not undeservedly) forgotten, while his "Novum Organon," his "Essays," and his "Advancement of Learning," are incapable of dying. People now-a-days remember Sidney's "Arcadia," but not Sidney's "Sonnets," much less those things which he "did into English." The "Leviathan" of Hobbes lives in a sort of dim way; but his translation of the "Iliad," though commended by Coleridge as a faithful one, is waste-paper. Cowley holds a rank as a prose-writer, which as a poet he cannot sustain.

But the rareness of the pen-and-ink faculty in these and others does not interfere with the general argument, firstly of usefulness, and secondly of obligation. They have been good servants to us, if not in one branch of polite letters, in the other. They have written, sung, painted in verse or prose the life of their days, the thoughts and ideas of them, the men and women of them.

The prose-writers have done their part: Fortescue, More, Latimer, Ascham, Raleigh, Camden, Howell, Burton ("Anatomy"

Burton), the character-writers, and a host more : infusing light into dark bodies, giving back to the dead a "warm and sensible motion," letting us, through their perspective pages, behold with naked eye our ancestors as they were, and the very heart and soul of the Younger England.

What wonders of imagination, wit, and thought have flowed, and will to all time, from goose's quill directed by some brain in the noon of its strength and luminosity ! How, by such means, we have brought vividly before our eyes life-size pictures, or sketches displaying the finest and subtlest touches of beauty and passion, with an exquisite delicacy present in the handling, or else quiet, homely scenes, depicting the contented lot and the spirit of peace.

A Titian or a Holbein is not less itself from being in a rude wooden frame or from being painted on hard board, or on canvas coarser than smack or lugger sailcloth. The best workmen have not always been daintiest in the selection of their materials. Hazlitt wrote his "Essays" on soiled foolscap fitter to wrap groceries in, while Elia was wont to scribble away his admirable "Letters" on sheets devised out of wastrel of old-world Leadenhall.

The possessors of the happy and prizable power of painting in pen-and-ink have achieved what they could : bringing us to the past so near that we can sometimes fancy we feel its warm breath upon our cheek, and lending to the unsubstantial an outline and a body.

But their capabilities are finite. There is a boundary-line, beyond which their art halts. It is not every thought which will let itself find expression in words without numbers, neither is it within the scope and compass of that pen-and-ink painting, which we call literature, to tell us all we would know, to put us in perfect communion with the remote in time and place, to re-people the prior English centuries with beings like ourselves (with a difference !), and to shew to us the persons and scenes of antiquity in their true physiognomy and in their absolute naturalness, as through a sorcerer's beryl. It is not in the power of literature, though it should exhaust reams in the endeavour, to inform empty monumental names with a sanguine corporeal motion. The description of a man in a book may be clever, may be witty ; it may be faithful and exact ; it may abound in excellent points thickly clustered, and from it you may draw in your mind's eye



a portrait. You may picture to yourself the manner of man that he is or was, imagine him in his moods, gather a conception of his speaking tones, and mould features, as the words of the author give you warrant.

But the man will still not be face to face with you. It will be a painting without inspiration. Its perspective will be a prismatic illusion. It will be self-coloured from top to bottom. It will be a lay-figure ; the flesh, like a signboard, without bloom, tone, or poetry of shadow and light ; the eyes, lapidary, statuesque, and the mouth dumb. It will be a lithograph.

There is not the same individuality essential, or at least it is scarcely essential in so high a degree, in landscape. In the delineation of less broadly and palpably articulate nature the fancy may be left to range without such great harm or offence, and to fulfil its forgetive office. But in a letterpress essay on the beauties of scenery there will be always lack of depth and colour ; depth which is a pictorial subtlety, and colour richly yet wisely mingled. What, in pen-and-ink workmanship, have we to shew, that could be put side by side with a Cuyp or a Gainsborough, with a Rembrandt or a Murillo ? Who could adequately describe "Jacob's Dream"—that miracle of colour and light and shade, where the figures are secondary ? How many millions of stewards and cooks have vanished without a sign, and how many have been described for us on paper, and yet we know them incomparably less well than the steward and cook of St. Alban's Abbey, whose effigies have been handed down to us. Once again, a painting can only be a likeness of an individual or a representation of an individual scene or subject. An epic or descriptive poem may embrace within its limits and covers a diorama of one or the other, or a medley of both. There are few works of art which go very far, like the Bayeux tapestry, or Hogarth's "Marriage à la mode," and "Rake's Progress," or, again, like Family and Corporation pictures, in this direction, and then, when all points considered, we look at the portrait gallery on paper of the Canterbury Pilgrims, how much has the muse of painting to throw into the scale to adjust the balance !

Of genuine resemblances of persons there is, after all deductions, a very large and precious residuum ; Holbeins in plenty, Vandykes which carry the master's hand in each line, absolute Lelys, more than enough of themselves to deify the art which they so superbly

illustrate. But we have to enter on the present ground with a forewarning that, after all efforts to appropriate likenesses to their true originals and their true authors, much remains unresolved.

Holbein's "Sir Thomas More" leaves very little that I can think of to be desired. It appears to me to be literally magnificent. No human pen could make us such splendid amends for not having seen this great man. We know him better at a glance, than if we had read volumes upon him. How like in vivid survival, though so different in handling, is the wonderful portrait of an old burgomaster by Rembrandt in the Museum at Antwerp! The town bought it from a gentleman at Aix-la-Chapelle, as I was shortly afterward informed. It is of all Rembrandts I have seen the most Titianesque; I recollect, when I entered the room, where it had just been hung, that I could see nothing else. Holbein's "Princess Elizabeth," at St. James's Palace, is not nearly so fine an example of colouring as the More; but it is the most graceful likeness of the future Queen which has fallen under our notice. Elizabeth was surely never handsome; but this picture, taken of her when she was a girl of sixteen, makes the best of a plain face, and is free from that stiffness and hardness which strike one in so many of the so-called Holbeins. Holbein's More is bolder in the conception and drawing, less cramped and mannered, more Titianesque, but yet careful in treatment.

Of a few other conspicuous personalities I say just this, that we profit by the ownership of resemblances of those executed in an unstudied, unpreconcerted style without previous consultation with the artist or with friends on the choice of drapery or pose; and such are the portraits in Lacroix of Froissart, Commynes, Ariosto, and Margaret of Navarre, which pleasantly suggest sittings given on the spur of the moment rather than with "malice prepense." One seems to recognize those four historical characters, as they appeared to their contemporaries and acquaintances, without any of the subtle artifices of the studio. Then again, the Princess Sibylla of Savoy and an old Dutch goldsmith of Groningen, within the same covers, how to the very life they are left behind for our affectionate appreciation, and are only not veritable flesh and blood, yet as no human pen could so delightfully realize. You see that that Low Country worthy is listening to a good story, or entertaining an affair of business on which

## WRITING AND PAINTING

he will not indifferently score. What prodigy of literary art could have so splendidly indemnified us for not personally beholding these, and more innumerable, in their living aspects, if not even in their speaking tones?

There is a portrait of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, painted in the decline of life, by an anonymous hand. That it is anonymous is to be regretted, for it is a fine thing. The old man lives to greet successive ages.

There are some important respects in which painted history seems to correct written history. We often derive very different impressions from books about people and from pictures of them. No portrait which I have seen of the illustrious Surrey, the poet, hero, and martyr, justifies our preconceived notion of the lover of Geraldine; and then think, too, of those which we have of Petrarch! The same must be said of Sir Thomas Wyatt, at least Surrey's equal as a poet, and yet, too, his appears to have been a noble head; nor is the Holbein drawing of Anne Boleyn at Hampton Court, or the engraved portrait of her in Lodge's collection, a key to her ascendancy over Henry VIII. The medal representing her in her coronation robes is even less elucidatory, and it must have been, one fears, a less spiritual attraction which brought the king to her feet. Lady Jane Grey's virtues, her gentleness, her scholarship, her nearness to the throne, all made her beloved in her own day, and have endeared her memory to us; but I confess that her portraits—all such as have any claim to be considered coeval—are disappointing. The question whether her painters have done her injustice, is one which can never be answered. There is a pretty likeness in oils of Elizabeth of Bohemia, when a child, and the portrait of her by Crispin de Pas in earlier womanhood strikes one as very far from unprepossessing; she must have exerted a powerful impression in earlier life on those about her; her admirers called her the "Queen of Hearts," and her kinsman, the Duke of Brunswick, always wore her glove in his helmet. It is well known that in maturer years she became painfully corpulent. She was an amiable and ill-fated princess, and some of the authors of the day have treated her physical disfigurement with compassionate tenderness. We should collect from their writings, if there was no other species of testimony, a very erroneous idea of the unhappy Bohemian queen. What an absurd misconception would have been formed by posterity of

the physiognomy of Charles II., if we had had nothing but the printed narratives to guide us ! if the Merry Monarch had not been fortunately transmitted, executed flatteringly, no doubt, if anything, in oils by the Court painters !

Was he such a lady-killer ? Nell Gwynne, Moll Davis, Lucy Waters, the Frenchwoman Querouaille or Carwell, and the rest of them, did they all see their advantage in not being too hard ? He must have had a way with him. To do him justice, he did not think himself an Adonis, but he had pleasant and popular manners, which in his case covered a multitude of sins, as they do in that of a successor.

These British kings and queens do not shew to much advantage, as a rule, in their portraits. Charles I. is nearly the most personable of the first category ; but take " Sylva " Evelyn, the Honourable Robert Boyle, or the great Selden, and one has quite as fine a gentleman—with what a different mind ! Cromwell puts them all to shame. The portrait of the Nurse to the Medici at Florence is nearly quite as regal as that of Claude de France, daughter of Louis XII., by Clouet. Perhaps the genius of the Italian artist has done something for his sitter.

There are several other likenesses of eminent figurers in English history, as to which there is apt to be a feeling of dissatisfaction and even distrust. Take, for example, those of Bradshaw the regicide and Montrose. There may have been infidelity or infelicity in the limning of these notable personages ; but their surviving portraits are not exactly *pièces justificatives*. Possibly these representations are as unreal as the current engraving of Marvell. A curious chapter might be written on prints which have done multifarious duty, and served almost equally well for a succession of celebrities. This is the dark side of the present subject.

How unsatisfactory, again, is the picture at Windsor of Thomas Carew and Thomas Killigrew by Vandyke ! We seem to have before us two insipid courtiers, and little besides. The pictures lack individuality of character and vigour of thought. The colouring is delightful ; there Vandyke is at home and himself ; but still they are ordinary portraits. By-the-by, I can hardly comprehend why Killigrew is called the Jester, any more than I can the application of the phrase to the Augustinian Canon, who founded St. Bartholomew's Hospital. Both said some witty

things; but are all men, who say witty things, called jesters? I have seen a copy of the "Baronage of England," by Dugdale, with the autograph of Killigrew. It is not a very funny book.

The greatness of Vandyke lay in drapery and hair; and he is usually happy in his attitudes, but not here. Both the figures are clumsily and unnaturally posed. Luckily we are not without better resemblances of these distinguished men. The means have been handed down to us elsewhere of judging of them more as they appeared in their everyday life. I abhor masquerade and melodramatic airs and graces, nor do I set much by holiday-clothes; but what an old poet terms very beautifully "the music" of the face I cannot surrender on any terms.

The Stanleys, Earls of Derby, in their portraits, look like captains of horse with royal commissions from His Majesty King Charles I. or II. Robert Bertie, first Earl of Lindsey, has the air of a Puritan chieftain. Campbell, Earl of Argyll, might be a Puritan preacher. Elizabeth, Duchess of Hamilton, Brandon, and Argyll, has a sweetly feminine and graceful, father perhaps than a dignified, look, and I do not like to say how much her Grace owes to that coquettish headdress, in which the painter has represented her.

Nobody requires to be told that Kerr, Earl of Lothian, was a leader of the Covenanters. His portrait, which has been engraved, like most of those I am mentioning, plainly tells us so much. There is George Gordon, Marquis of Huntly; he is included in Lodge's Collection. If one was told that he was a filibuster, a Scottish borderer, or a marquis in a play, if one was shown a proof of him *before letters*—one would not be incredulous. Robert Dormer, Earl of Carnarvon, might, for aught his *vera effigies* appears to instruct to the contrary, be a "minion of the moon," a Claude Duval—only less the gentleman! Looking at the received likeness of Robert Burton, who wrote the "Anatomy of Melancholy," one gets the impression of a crazy sectarian divine. One does not feel as if this was a man who could pen a book good enough and sane enough to bring Dr. Johnson out of bed uncomfortably betimes. Did it?

We have yet to see a portrait of Drayton which we could, without an apparent unfitness, and some violence to a foregone conclusion, place before his "Sonnets," or bind up with his "Nymphidia." There is about the common, familiar print of him, with

his brows laureated, a melancholy, discontented, atrabilious cast of expression, which shocks our ideal conception of him who, in the name of Rowland, sacrificed to the Muses. The lugubrious, unspiritual likeness of Milton by Marshall, of which his sitter so reasonably complained, is excellently suited to go with it; yet it represents the poet at thirty-seven.

There is a large humanity manifest in the portrait of Fielding. We hardly know what is to be said about Smollett. He, too, was a man of the world, with abundant shrewdness of observation, and a keen relish for life and its gaieties in his younger days. He looks, in his picture, as if he remembered without regret the associations of his youth, and had still a sneaking fondness for good fellowship. He went about, when he had nothing else or better to do, and studied men; and to this we owe his imperishable romances.

Turn to some of the portraits which exist of the artists themselves. In Holbein, how little the outer man seems to mirror the inner! He might be somebody following a gross handicraft, or a Flemish burgomaster, a sensualist at home in his cups.

Then Hilliard has the bearing of a nobleman, has it more than any of the Percys, whom Vandyke painted. Vandyke has a good deal of the coxcomb about him. He desires you to notice his white hands, and the gem which glitters there. Peter Oliver reminds us of a leader of *Venturi*, who took up the brush as an amusement. Both Rubens and Rembrandt are *super-royal*. Robert White might be a divine, who painted, as Sir Arthur Helps wrote, in his intervals of leisure.

There are others which are above all praise. Dobson, Flatman (poet and painter), Lanière, Verrio, Vansomer, and Sir Godfrey—these have the true *artist* look, and yet possess the carriage of gentlemen to the manner born.

Among French writers, Corneille, if we may trust the engraved portrait, had a head worthy of Shakespear; a Frenchman might put this contrariwise! The accepted likenesses of Rabelais and La Fontaine do not precisely convey to the mind one's idea of the originals. The author of "*Gargantua*" has the appearance of a pleasant and contented old gentleman, who filled some professorial chair at an ancient university. You would not divine him to be the producer of the filthiest book, considering all the circumstances, in the filthiest literature in Europe. The obscenity

of Rabelais is more unpardonable than that of Boccaccio or Marguerite de Valois ; for it does not inspire even that sort of sensuous rapture which one is apt to have in perusing the "Decameron" or the "Heptameron," that sort of feeling that one is in genteel, if not in very moral, company. The old French fabliaux are indecent enough, and so is La Fontaine ; but the former simply exhibit to us with ingenuous candour the early social depravities of the French—precursors of Zola—while La Fontaine redeems the licentiousness of his paraphrases from older writers with a thousand French charms. His Tales were such as his contemporaries of both sexes were not ashamed to read and to quote. You cannot quote Rabelais ; he is a suppressed author ; and why ? because forsooth he has, according to the highest authorities, overlaid his hidden beauties with a superficies of impurity as with a palimpsest to safeguard himself from the gibbet or the stake in a time of prevailing darkness and bigotry. It is certainly rather trying to read him, as it is, though for a totally different reason, some of the works of Zola. Yet at the same time a broad and perspicacious paper on the author of "Pantagruel" as a leader of thought, might make him emerge a heavy creditor to many, who followed him in point of time, and were, if less original, more decorous. What is not garbage in him, is not wit. Clothe him in the daintiest and richest binding ; see that the paper and the print are irreproachable ; and you cannot do away with the sense of proximity to ordure. Yet we live, we English, in a sort of glass-house of our own ; for down to the time of the second George what coarseness, what obscenity ! Parts of Swift are not much purer than the author of "Pantagruel." The Dean of St. Patrick's was as unclean as he was malignant. Then, again, are there scholars ready to tell you that Rabelais was a borrower, a copyist of the ancient Greek dramatic caricature ; but indeed he had no occasion to go so far back, for the popular literature of his own country was perfectly capable of supplying models ready-made to his hand. There were Rabelaisians before Rabelais. I have said that he is a suppressed author. But, like a volume of imprisoned, pent-up air, he has burst his confines, and speaks *ore rotundo* to all nations. You must be content to tell your less studious and more squeamish friends, when they inquire, that he was a very humorous old rascal, who wrote allegorically from a fear of the

Church, and put broad things into his book to hold up the vices of the age to ridicule. But, seriously, no man was ever any better from reading Rabelais, or ever much worse from reading La Fontaine. It is perhaps a pity that Rabelais did not carry his dread of the Inquisition farther, and write, like Brusonius or the pseudo-Meursius, in Latin. I am certainly sorry that La Fontaine, so far as his "Contes et Nouvelles" are concerned, was allowed by his good genius to fall into the clutches of illustrators, who have exaggerated his worst defects.

That painting fails in so many cases to realize expectations or to justify foregone ideas, does not detract from the merit and worth of the art, but, on the contrary, establishes them both on a firmer footing. Laboured and flattered resemblances on canvas are even more mischievous than such resemblances on paper. You are brought closer up to the person represented in a picture than in a book. There may be many links, several hands between a writer and his hero; but in the other case the artist is the only middle-man. He paints flesh and blood from flesh and blood. We ought to know his employer nearly as well as he knew him. If the artist did honestly by him and by us, we are but one remove from personal intimacy. The painter is our common friend.

A man's written thoughts about another, even about another with whom he lived, and whom he could shake by the hand, are not often direct from nature. They have passed through the churn.

Formerly portrait was mainly restricted to personages, who could pay artists, and to men and women of mark. Now every individual, be he or she what they may, enjoys the means of perpetuating himself or herself within certain lines, while the public has the opportunity of comparing notes. Modern methods assist us in bridging over the distance between the classes. Looking at the resemblances of some nobleman and of some *bourgeois*, we sometimes perceive that the latter has more of the patrician in his appearance, if not in his character. Photography is a democrat, an appreciable factor in levelling old distinctions. We are going too far in that direction.

A photograph, however, even an instantaneous one, is apt to be a point of view rather than a picture, which should be eclectic, a collation of several seizures of expression, a thoughtful reproduction on a principle of average. A group of photographs,



taken with the utmost care and skill at brief intervals, might serve a painter even to a larger extent than ordinary sketches made for a landscape. For the majority the photograph, pure and simple, is, however, more than good enough—more than durable enough.

## XVIII

### BABYLOGY

“Paullo majora canemus.”

“Vita Janua Mortis.”

“Mr. Wordsworth being asked why he admired the sleep of infancy, said he thought there was a grandeur in it.”—HAZLITT'S “Plain Speaker.”

NOT the least important enterprise of the present reign in the direction of geographical discovery is just completed; and we have the pleasure of putting down the results on paper. It is the exploration of the *Terra Incognita* of *Babyland* by a writer who ought *ipso facto* to be elected by acclamation President of the Royal Geographical Society.

It is due to the author to mention that the undertaking was not inaugurated by the Society in any manner, and it may be safely said to surpass in popular interest anything of the kind which has been accomplished, not excepting even perhaps the publication by the late Lemuel Gulliver of his extraordinary researches in Lilliput, Brobdingnag, and Yahoo.

The superficial extent of Babyland (we must be careful not to write down Baby-*lon*) was most imperfectly known and appreciated till to-day. It is now satisfactorily ascertained to be a large and densely-populated region, of which the natives exhibit certain rather peculiar characteristics. They have so much in common with the inhabitants of Mr. Gulliver's Lilliput, that their stature is almost their least recommendation. The costume of Lilliputia has not been described for us, unfortunately, with that minuteness which is so largely essential in books of foreign travel, but we believe that it was entirely different from the long dresses, white hoods, and woollen shoes, in use among the people of Babyland. The most accurate information again has descended to us respecting the wardrobe of Tom Thumb, and it does not correspond in any particular. The Babylanders are a distinct race. In fact, what countryman Tom was, is one of those historical points which remains to be settled to the satisfaction of the world. Tom was no Babylander, believe me.

Nor do I think that Jack the Giant-killer could claim cousinhood with Tom, judging from the account of his life and actions which I have the good fortune to possess. It is a biography deficient in notes of time; nor are his cap, shoes, and sword known with absolute certainty to be extant. I take him to have been an artful and precocious young fellow, who did good in his way, but was sometimes guilty of unknighly stratagems, to which Tom, from the circle in which he moved, would not have dreamed of stooping.

Mr. Gulliver, though doubtless a gentleman of curious observation, does not appear to have interested himself in religious questions, and has not mentioned what opinions, if any, are current in Lilliput on the subject of a future state. The belief in such a thing ought, on grounds which may be apparent, to be a primary article of faith in Babyland. But the people there are, unhappily or otherwise, destitute of any settled religion, are prone to pleasurable emotions, and let their intellects have a fallow time of it—in short, are egotists, sceptics, sweet-tooths, sensualists—born votaries of Morpheus, and worshippers of heathenish images in the likeness of Pap-Boats.

Idle fancies and speculations these; but they are part of us, the better part; for the realities too often carry pretensions which we cannot recognize, or are unable to satisfy.

Formerly were written and published certain tracts, entitled, "Small Books on Great Subjects," the learned and modest authors unknown; and lo! here I present to view a "Great Essay on a Small Subject," fittest to be traced on paper with a gosling's quill.

Babyland is no geographical expression, it has become time to explain, not even as much as the two Utopias of Euhémerus and Sir Thomas More are, but a distinction in human natural history, in animal natural history, yes, and in vegetable, too. Where-soever babies are, is Babyland—the very Babyland I write of. In a large-hearted sense I use the phrase. I desire to comprehend within it all kinds, denominations, varieties, *genera*, of that truly fascinating race, each in its own way articulate and speech-gifted, to range over the whole infancy of Nature, bountiful mother, goddess without spleen or partizanship.

How true it is, though so worn a saying, that we all return often in thought to our childhood, when life was like some

unexplored region mapped before us, unenacted and darkly future, and sigh for the opportunity to recover the starting-point and traverse the once-trodden ground anew, with later lights to guide us. But life is a drama, of which the text cannot be blotted out, like the text of a book, and *written over*. Our seniors lament their youth forepassed, turning, while time quenches apace the fire of their blood, and viewing in mind's eye that, which they once half-believed not to be perishable and transitory; and then again men in their middle years are apt to bestow a wistful look on the last of the seven ages. But the future has, on the whole, few regards. Childhood lives to itself, and age looks behind. The thoughts of the old will turn away from the end of life and the unfathomable destiny of the soul to pleasanter dwelling-places for reflection, the dawn and the prime of their days. There the mind can rest, and fancy make the past seem all but near enough to be touched; and of the knowledge that we so laboured to acquire, how much of it should we not like to barter for the state of thought, when we were all the richer from knowing less? how much, if we could, we should be content to throw behind us?

There is much in common between humanity and the dumb creation up to a certain point, when the two may be said to diverge. There is a subtle link and a hidden likeness between human babies and animal babies: the same comicality, materialism, and cupboard love. The life of very little children and very little pigs has the same delightful egotism and the same honest partiality for those three primitive, *pre-Saturnic*, pre-tree-of-knowledge, divisions of existence: eating, drinking, and sleeping. The severance of the identity appears to come at the hardening of the brain in the very little child, the human baby, and the casting off the slough of its babyhood to go to school, while the very little pig, the animal baby, "blows out into the maturity of rank bacon."

I am no Malthusian, and after all deductions which I am capable of making, there seem to me few more delightful studies than Baby life; infancy biped, quadruped, and centiped; the nonage of the world, the *Principia* of all created nature. Only earliest youth escapes sophistication, and has no offending angles. It is exempt from prejudice. It judges people from a matter-of-fact point of view, and cannot be brought to perceive

blemishes against its direct convictions. It takes us as it finds us. It is as guileless as Eden, where these chubby innocences, according to the author of *Moses*, never had *locus standi*, but where the first settlers sprang into instantaneous maturity, mutually unconscious of youth, as, a good while ago now, from the brain of her imperial and royal papa sprang the Lady Pallas Athenai. What an enchanting experience for many a school-boy it would be to begin thus in the middle, Adam-wise, to burst upon the world in full panoply of whisker, to escape that figurative ordeal of Moloch, to have no sombre memories of Dr. Birch!

Life is like some journey drawn out. At the close of it, or near the close, we turn back, and see such and such things that we might have done better, and such and such that had as well been let alone; friendships formed to be regretted, and others missed or spurned, the loss or neglect of which we have to mourn at our leisure: a history, made to seem little by retrospect, of ill choice of paths and misspending of years. Too many of us do not outgrow our childhood, save in a seniority of folly and vice. But Babyhood is without a past to moralize upon, knows only the short shadows of first morning, soft and sunny. It has no dallying hopes or sway-ing fears. It has a keen sense of its individual being. Of the boundless future which lies beyond it it is felicitously unconscious. Its mind's eye is fixed upon what is present and grossly palpable. Out of sight is out of mind. Babyhood turns the tables upon morality clearly in one way; there are vices which it makes not only tolerable, but fascinating. In grown-up people egotism becomes repulsive, but the egotism of the little, both man and beast, wins our affection and respect. A baby is your sole endurable Narcissus.

Bruin, again—does he not cease to be presentable, when he has passed the unlicked stage? Lumpishness is all very well in the cub; there is even something about it, which passes for drollery. A little later on, we call it by a less indulgent name. Our *quondam* acquaintance no longer strikes us as a humorist; he has entered on the era of Louthood. The kid, whose frolics have moved many a smile, makes a clumsy figure in after life. Every day robs the kitten of some beauty of infancy. The pig ripens into an unravishing elder.

Years warp and spoil. The little boy, whom we remember holding on our knee, becomes, perhaps, the editor of a magazine, and abuses our productions—lampoons his father's friends. The sweet and simple school-girl, whose fairy steps have echoed to ours in many a ramble among the lanes and on the shore, marries some rich inarticulate clown, and dwindles into a fashionable lady. My daughter, when she was not yet a hundred moons of age, thought me as great a hero as the author of the "Princess" or the conductor of the *Edinburgh Review*: she is now old enough to be of a different opinion. My son used to fancy I knew everything; some of my worshipful critics believe that I know nothing. It is to be hoped that the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. When I left a great school, I was master of *x*. I at present feel that I am lamentably ignorant of many things which I ought to have learned—more so, than I care to own. I am only wiser than others in knowing how numerous are my desiderata.

It is a just, and salutary ordinance of nature, that the sweet illusions of infancy are not long cherished; but, while it lasts, it is (right or wrong) the most innocent of idolatries, the most delightful fetish—a little child's guileless worship! Nor are there many things more weirdly touching. But I suppose that it is a wise and meet provision that, as the dainty suckling waxes in limb and girth, the spell is insensibly relaxed, and the chit, whom we conceited in our good hearts too fragile to trust even to avuncular caresses, proceeds the horny-handed colonist, and carries his birth-year written in his copious beard.

It was excellently put by Cicero in his treatise *De Senectute*, that the old have that advantage over the young, that the old have lived long, while the young can only hope to do so. But it may seem not impertinent or out of place to add that the young, in their turn, are removed a lifetime farther than their seniors from the point which separates the finite from the infinite. They hold a throw more! Death, it is to be presumed from the very little that we are enabled to know of it, puts an end to hope, doubt, and speculation. There can be no religious casuistry beyond the grave. This, however, seems predicable of the view of Cicero, where he speaks of Man as successively looking up to the next stage of his career, that

the earlier steps forward are usually restricted to physical development, and do not embrace intellectual rivalry.

It was perhaps a natural and excusable fallacy on the part of the Scottish poet, Drummond of Hawthornden, that a lengthened term of life is superfluous, since one can exhaust the beauties of Nature in a very brief space of time—in a year, nay, in a day. Drummond posed as a secluded scholar; as a man of fortune his career was exceptionally tranquil and undiversified; but such a criticism is, as a rule, of the narrowest application, and can hold good only in the case of such as never emerge from their natal soil, from the hamlet which gave them birth. Nature may be the same everywhere; but it is with a difference, because Nature is universal, not parochial; and beyond the enjoyment of Nature some of us at least aspire to efforts and results, which are to be our monuments for ever, and which the most protracted life often leaves incompletely executed.

What we understand by Babyhood is first childhood, *Prima Ætas*—youth not yet most faintly conscious of the reasoning gift, or of the line of separation between a little child and a little kitten. Babyhood has not yet entered into the region of expectation; but old age has traversed it, and can look back upon those who are climbing the ascent. In youth we stand, so to speak, in the antechamber of life, and have gained an imperfect glimpse of the society in which it will be our business to stir presently, each according to his call; but in Babyhood we are on the threshold of existence. We are at the happier extremity of humanity. We are in the world, and not of it yet. We are but as bulbs which have just pushed their heads above ground. We are the materials held in readiness, which will form in the ripeness of time a generation of men richer in science than the generations gone before.

We have eyes to see, and do not see, and ears to hear, and do not hear. Our senses are wrapped in a delicious spell. We go on in one long unbroken voluptuous day-dream. The world is no more to us than some raree show, some holiday pageant. To-day is very much like yesterday. The tide of life (if this be life, and not rather a kind of prelude to it) flows on in soft murmuring ripples.

Our wants are few, but what we have are peremptory, and must by no means be gainsaid. We would be understood to have

an imperiousness just in that point, but of course of a very charming description, and not to be reasonably quarrelled with. As if we had the faculty given us to foresee how much of it we shall have to contend against when the real drama of life commences, we can brook no contradiction at the present stage. As a slight set-off to our infantile loveliness, we have a little disposition to be fractious, and we have no mean opinion of Number One in ordinary. We love ourselves best, and are not hypocrites enough to disguise it.

This is the age of sheer irresponsibility. Babies are accountable for their actions to no man. They set the laws of England at defiance. To read the Mutiny Act to them is waste of time. They are amenable to no jurisdiction whatever, for they have yet to attain the status of *persons*. They are not integers, but fractions. They rule the roost by a certain *vis inertiae*. Babies carry it with a high hand over their familiars, as of right. Their superiority over the rest of creation is a prescription. It is a vested privilege beyond the memory of man, which it would be a high misdemeanour, a species of *lèse majesté*, to infringe or demur to by word or deed.

An Athenian statesman once shewed how his little boy ruled the world. He set about proving this by a syllogism as satisfactory and ingenious as most syllogisms are. Here, to be sure, was an extreme case, which demanded some such piece of sophistry to help it out. But even in a general way these pretended weaklings have a world of their own, in which they move, and own a lordship paramount, as the excellent author of "Herr Baby" lets us understand.

The earliest impressions we form will be probably upon points immediately connected with our own self-importance. We quickly become aware of our individuality. It does not take long to convince us that our personal identity is a distinct and indisputable fact. No baby, whose opinion is worth a straw, would change places with another baby, if he knew it. This egotism, proneness to blue rages, strong gastronomical leanings, gross predilection for the delights of the berceau-nette, and other frailties, are redeemed, however, by half-twice as many virtues.

There is an earthiness (in its best sense) about very little children, a fragrance as delightful as the fragrance of mignonette.



They have a roundness and wealth of flesh scarcely consonant with the abstract idea one forms of cherubim. They want the incorporeal airiness and sublimer grace of these. As we get on in years, though we may not sensibly progress in goodness, there is a gain in ether and transparency of substance. The spiritual part of us *shews more light through*. The poetry of mind supersedes the poetry of matter, the beauty of mere external form. But for ever we lose the innocence and the unacquaintance with deceit, which are the belongings of babyhood. They leave us, not to return, after a stay as short as a midsummer night. Even the child, just emergent from infancy, begins to acquire those unangelic instincts, which seem to come to most of us as surely as our teeth, from a touch, however slight and guarded, with not too pure a world.

## XIX

### ERRATA

“Habent sua fata libelli.”—TERENTIANUS MAURUS, *De Syllabis*.

MEN who are always in quest of out-of-the-way knowledge can hardly fail to come across a good deal which should interest even those who are not themselves archaeologists, and who are perhaps sometimes a little too apt, on the principle illustrated by the elderly fable of the Fox and the Grapes, to underrate the labourers in such fields of research. The majority, of course, do not care a jot about literary antiquities, and of those who profess to do so a sensible proportion considers that it has paid sufficient homage to the study by purchasing Nichols' "Anecdotes and Illustrations" (chiefly of his friends and himself), and a few other deplorably dull books which purport to let one behind the scenes, in uniform illegible sets by the most eminent binders. Facts about persons very familiar by name and repute to the general public may be brought to light from sources of which the general public is complacently ignorant. A new circumstance about Bacon or Shakespear, about Rubens or Vandyke, arrests the attention of thousands, who would positively object to be regarded as antiquaries, and would not step a yard out of their way to make the discovery on their own account. Among the themes which are associated with this kind of knowledge is the erroneous attribution of books at various times to authors and others, under more or less valuable inducements.

Certainly, more than once the parties themselves were accessories before the fact, were clearly chargeable with misprision of deceit. Just in one case or so, perhaps, the honours of a title-page were conferred on a literary gentleman deceased, and therefore presumably without consulting his wishes. Mr. Moloch of Paternoster Row, at whose shrine writers of either sex are immolated in the broadest daylight without any attempt at concealment, made free, maybe, with somebody's name and

fame for purposes of lucre and aggrandizement. Some of these were pretty innocents whose fate solicits the sympathy of the benevolent. But it has been observed that our taskmasters prefer, if they can get them, scribes in the full heyday of flesh and blood for this sort of service to any such in buckram.

Thomas Campbell is reported to have cared for very little beyond his poetical reputation; and I think that we can understand his feeling. He was sensitive there because it was his vulnerable part. He set store by what the world thought and said of the "Pleasures of Hope" and "Hohenlinden"; for these had cost him something, had cost him brain-work. "Where his treasure was, there was his heart also." But people might entertain what opinions they chose about the editorship of the *New Monthly Magazine*, or about his prose works; for these cost him only his name.

A man, unless he is preternaturally lucky, is a long time in building up a name, with which he can step into the market, and (as if it were the title-deeds of an estate or the family plate) raise a handsome figure in cash. It is a tiresome corner to turn; but it is marvellous what a man may do when he has turned it. What Campbell succeeded in accomplishing was not so very inconsiderable.

His prose works have just been mentioned. There is "The Life of Mrs. Siddons, by Thomas Campbell, Esq.," in two volumes octavo. There is, secondly, "The Life of Sir Thomas Lawrence, R.A., by Thomas Campbell, Esq.," in two volumes octavo. There is, thirdly, "The Life of Petrarch, by Thomas Campbell, Esq.," in two volumes octavo. Now, the matter appears to stand in this way: that this imposing array of publications owed their existence and any merit they may possess to a gentleman who had a facile pen and a knack of putting things cleverly together. Campbell visited at the house, was intimate with him and his family, and threw these small deer in his way, charging a commission, it is barely possible, for getting the order and lending the negotiable medium.

Does it not seem a little hard at first sight, that those pieces of biography, such as they were or ought to have been, should have been laid before the public with one not perfectly *bond fide* feature about them? It was almost as bad as an utterance of counterfeit coin. But the world unfortunately possesses

an abundance of books which, if not put forward exactly under false features, do not carry on their front their true paternity. The volume of Heraldry which goes under the name of Guillim the Pursuivant-of-Arms is generally understood to have been prepared by a vicar of Barking in Essex, who was shy of identifying himself in print with secular researches. The unrecognized obligations of Dugdale in his "Monasticon" to the MSS. of Dodsworth, and of Smollett in his "Don Quixote" to his predecessor Jarvis, the friend of Pope, are tolerably well known. But in another case, Halstead's "Succinct Genealogies," no injustice seems to have been done to any one, if it be taken that Halstead is a mere *nom de plume*; and the same observation is equally true of the "Memoirs of Secret Service," by the first Earl of Peterborough, who employs the pseudonym of Matthew Smith, Esquire. Smollett, who was not a Spanish scholar, went to the earlier version of Jarvis, who was; and there are such as prefer the former, which can only mean that the author of "Peregrine Pickle" knew how to steal without spoiling what he stole,—nay, how to lend another man's property an enhanced value. After all, even in Jarvis we lean to the notion that the curious old engravings in the quarto edition are the best part of the bargain, and they are copies from the French. Jarvis was an educated man, a painter, and a linguist; but he was a pedant and without much literary tact; and one regrets to see that Mr. Duffield, in his new rendering of the old Spanish author, permitted to himself the use of an archaic diction, of which he was not quite a master. It is always hazardous to play with edged tools. It is possible that our most vivid translation of Cervantes, next to that of Jarvis with its sympathetic illustrations, is the engraved one which we owe to the late Gustave Doré; it is at any rate as good as the one by John Philips, Milton's nephew, in which he professed to adapt the text to "the humour of our modern language." The fact is that those, who desire to read "Don Quixote," must graduate by learning the language in which that intractable romance was composed. The Anglicized version invariably proves to be a mule, like the fabulous progeny of the eagle and the lion.

Translations, I take it, have an inherent liability to turn out unsatisfactory. The burden of proof lies on the translator. I speak from a painfully intimate experience, when I

say that we have yet to meet with a version of any classical or foreign author, which reproduces the original. And if such be the case with Homer, Herodotus, and Athenæus among the Greeks, and Horace, Virgil, and Cicero among the Romans, to go no farther, what is to be expected from an attempt to transplant to another soil such especially idiomatic writers in their centuries, as Butler, Bunyan, Sterne, and Dickens? You may be a perfect master of both languages, and you may give throughout, as nearly as may be, the corresponding wit, phrase, or *argot*; but it will be a sorry affair at the best. Voltaire expresses warm admiration for "Hudibras"; but he was probably in a position to dispense with an interpreter.

The mention of the great Frenchman makes me think, that he is a candidate for admission here. The seventy volumes, which form his Works, are sought by faddists, who must have them on large paper in old morocco with all the foolish plates to the "Henriade" and the "Pucelle." But what I mean by Voltaire is his own vast, wide, and enduring personality and that sort of handbook of his private opinions, the "Philosophical Dictionary." Those who buy his works, have an imperfect hearsay idea of what he was; those who know what he was are well aware that his works will not stand them in great stead.

The author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" might appear singularly invulnerable against an assault by a renderer into another tongue, yet that famous, though stubborn, piece of vernacular was not five years of age, before it met with two Dutch admirers in the persons of a translator and an illustrator of the translation.

A remarkable fatality has overtaken Cervantes. His English translators, in none of whom he can be said to have been particularly happy, seem to have combined to mislead the general reader, even as to the true titles of the original books. The sorry countenance of Don Quixote becomes sorrowful, and the Ingenuous Knight becomes the Ingenious one. The *Novelas Exemplares* become the "Exemplary Novels." The "Trials of Persiles and Sigismunda" become their "Travels," just as the Travels of Ulysses in a set of French engravings of the seventeenth century are conversely described as his *Travaux*, and as Edward the Redeless or Thriftless has passed almost down to to-day as Edward the Unready. But how can these trifles affect

the indestructible reputation of an author, who lives from age to age by virtue of a production which very few Englishmen have read, even in a translation. We read "Gil Blas." We get a notion of "Don Quixote" from elegant extracts and hearsay,—nay, also from the admirable engravings in Jarvis's quarto edition or the French set on a similarly large scale.

I do not know what is to be thought or said about some of the modern hybrids, where author and translator are sometimes found in a strange sort of relationship, and you do not get a version of a book produced in a foreign or dead language, but one gentleman comes forward, and introduces you to another, telling you as much as he pleases about him, and a good deal more about himself. The original writer becomes a lay figure, on which his excellent redeemer from oblivion can ingeniously dispose the drapery, so as to leave the real subject of the Essay in a sort of *chiaroscuro*.

Again, there is the second edition of the "Somers Tracts," "Revised, augmented, and arranged" by Sir Walter Scott; the "Aldine Poets," with Memoirs by the Rev. John Mitford; the "History of Amadis of Gaul," translated from the original Portuguese by Robert Southey. There is a "Life of Titian," by James Northcote, R.A.; and "Select Poets of Great Britain," by William Hazlitt.

Scott put his name on a title-page of the "Somers Tracts," and did little besides. The wretched old translation of "Amadis," corrected here and there in Southey's own hand, still exists; it is the one which the printer probably employed for the edition from the original Portuguese; and yet it is commended by Dunlop as a scholarly version by the more modern writer. All that Mr. Mitford did for the Poets was to preface each with a biography in very indifferent English and a passable sonnet. Northcote had as much concern in the "Life of Titian," and Hazlitt in the "Select Poets," as Scott had in the "Somers Tracts," or Campbell in the lives of Siddons, Lawrence, and Petrarch. The booksellers and the public paid for the names, and got them, but scarcely anything beyond. These literary celebrities had built up, at more or less outlay, a marketable reputation, a sort of liquid asset, with which very little will go a long way, and without which you will be bowed out by every firm in London. A man, who is at last discovered by the critics to be a neglected genius,

has a terrible weapon put into his hands. He may talk a vast deal of nonsense with impunity and even with approbation—and sometimes (as we know) he does! It is his *revanche*, the *vendetta* of the Too-late recognised; he laughs in his sleeve, feeling abundantly sure that he is neither better nor worse than he was twenty years ago, when every one passed him in the street, and the sagacious reviewers saw nothing in him. But the day of reckoning frequently arrives only with the advent of a collected edition of the gentleman's writings, when he is found to have left behind him performances of unequal execution.

When I look through the writings of Browning, I seem to identify the man, who was spoiled by success and adulation. He began by writing in ordinary characters, and by degrees thought it sufficient for a person of such exalted genius to use a cypher or shorthand. Some of the earlier compositions of this writer in the vernacular procured him the celebrity, which tempted him to play tricks with the public, and offer to his readers, not poetry, but insoluble conundrums in metrical form of which even the excellent Society, expressly established to expound them, does not appear to have been able to make much. And his humour partakes of the same cryptogramic character. It might have been of service to be provided with a glossary to the new collected edition; but even the bard himself was unable to explain on demand some passages in his works. He was betrayed by too obsequious admirers into neglect of form, poverty and vulgarity of style, and wilful slovenliness of rhythm. His later work resembled that which he describes with such contemptuous unction in the opening stanza of "*Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis*."

The retaliation of Mr. Carlyle for much unfavourable criticism on his early labours was exhibited in that grotesque vocabulary, which he employed in his historical works, and in the reduction of his characters to his own preconceived standard. His accounts of the French Revolution, of Cromwell, of Frederic of Prussia, await a translator with revising power. The fantastic mannerism overlays the page like a semi-opaque varnish.

This reminds one, again, of the impregnable stronghold which many of our great classics enjoy in their unchallenged renown. Doubtless, their rank in our eyes is the nett product of the

deliberate judgment of ages, and is barred against common criticism by an unwritten statute of limitations; yet what would some of our learned and *ex cathedra* friends say if in a book of the day sent in for review anything half so vapid and half so silly as may be easily pointed out in nine-tenths of the early literature were to present itself? *Aliquando dormitat* is only admissible of those whose dust centuries have consecrated.

One of the most serious blows to our modern prepossessions is the latter-day German import of analytical investigation applied to our older dramatic literature, which, unless we choose to bury our heads in the sand, has turned, and is yet turning, what many of us guilelessly thought to be homogeneous works by this or that playwright, into shreds and patches more or less artfully knit together, by some syndicate or by a succession of persons, of whom Shakespear is, or may be, one. I do not feel that I can read with the same wealth of confidence and enjoyment such mosaics. I cannot tell, I cannot, where Shakespear begins or ends. I must have an edition in parti-coloured inks: here words, there lines, here passages, in blue or red, arranged under the lynx eye of Mr. Fleay; and it may turn out, that Shakespear has been turned into a Limited Company.

There are many productions in every literature which, being translations, pass for original works. But a singular instance of the converse of this presents itself in the "Tales of the Genii," actually written by James Ridley, and professing to have been translated from the Persian by Sir Charles Morell. This leads me to think of the "Arabian Nights," of which one has heard so much of late years through the admirable labours of Burton and Payne, and of which a French scholar has more recently presented us with an independent unexpurgated version. But it is nowhere stated with sufficient clearness or candour that no means have so far been discovered of arriving at a correct idea of what the original text was, as it survives only in patchwork transcripts and garbled copies, of which the best translation in the world is bound to be more or less fallacious.

About half the printed paper we have is either anonymous or pseudonymous, a voluminous heritage, which we are entitled under the circumstances to include in a general return of thanks. The misascription of works goes back at least to the days of Moses. That Solomon and David had any concern in the literary



labours which pass under their names, there is no proof and equal likelihood; and it is a rather singular coincidence or parallel that our British Solomon (son of David the Fiddler) published a version of the Psalms in English as his own, though much of the volume actually proceeded from other pens. The conflicting accounts which Diogenes Laertius gives of the genesis of books as well as sayings shews what uncertainty prevailed at that early time on these subjects. To this day we are equally doubtful about the men, who libelled Cardinal Mazarin and the Caliph Haroon El Reschid. Nor have we yet identified Maitre Guillaume who so pleasantly and so ably wrote about public affairs in France under Henry of Navarre. In our modern catalogues we have not yet done with the tiresome practice of marshalling the compositions of several writers under one head, and apportioning the labours of one man among many, because the orthography of proper names was formerly irregular.

We cannot be satisfied that we have identified all that Johnson did for Cave or all that Goldsmith did, for Newbery. Let us almost hope that we never shall. It might prove to be not treasure-trove, but something different. Sensible writers keep back the not very brilliant doings of their youth. Their days of drudgery in booksellers' back-parlours were to the men of the last century their prehistoric era. Charles Lamb committed to the press more than all that he thought worthy of preservation; but it would not have occupied the long row of volumes which compose, in publishers' jargon, the library edition of his works, and still less the area of the ponderous and nearly laughable *Edition de Luxe* superintended by the late Master of the Temple. I am persuaded that Lamb and his sister would have declined to sanction the reappearance in a permanent shape of "Mrs. Leicester's School," "Album Verses," "Poetry for Children," and the (save "John Woodvil") "Plays." I own that about the "Adventures of Ulysses" I feel differently; for I do not think that the author emptied Chapman of his divinity (to use Lamb's own expression) half so much as Dr. Maginn succeeded in missing the spirit of the Greek poet in his whimsical series of "Homeric Ballads." The "Poetry for Children" may be neither better nor much worse than other nursery verse-books; but it ought no more to have been bound up with the literary remains of an English classic than such trash as "Prince Dorus" and "Beauty and the Beast." "Mr. H."

may be a diverting trifle; but it has neither poetical nor dramatic value. "John Woodvil" at any rate has passages. As for "Prince Dorus," the "Queen of Hearts," and one or two more supposed-to-be happy Recoveries, alas! they are something like the poorest of pot-fuel. So it has been again with the late Walter Pater, whose posthumous papers might have with such wonderful advantage been let alone. These are not cases of a table of *Errata* to a book; the books themselves are *Errata*, as men and women may be—men and women misborn or misplaced. Look at the literary phenomenon offered to our consideration in the issue by Ruskin of his metrical productions, commencing with those which came from his pen as a youth of nine. These last are of course of infinitesimal worth, and it was unwise to include them in the collection, or even to let the collection appear, as it cannot add much to the fame of the author. The original impression of the "Juvenilia" might have been cherished by a few as a curiosity. Yet thousands of persons probably read these compositions with avidity, and endeavoured to discern in them subtle and occult excellences. It is, in short, a book which no one, whose friends possessed a healthy influence over him, or who, on the other hand, had not lifted himself above normal criticism by labours of a very different calibre, would have dared to lay before the public. Ruskin believed himself to be invulnerable, and shrewdly surmised that whatever he printed the reviewers would treat tenderly, and the wide circle of his admirers would buy and applaud. It was perhaps intended to be his parting gift to our poor world, before he joined the gods.

Dickens, in our own day, was surely not very backward in giving publicity to every scrap which he judged deserving of paper and print, yet an editor has been found for sundry waifs and strays which it would have been far kinder to have left where they were. This is running into an unwise and unhealthy extreme. For I am unable to think of an author whose reputation would be proof against an exhaustive collection of his literary labours. I shudder at the mere possibility of some enthusiastic printing club undertaking to present to us the lately-discovered MSS. of Sir Isaac Newton in a modest barrow-load of volumes. Rather let a future generation, which has lost the clues, put all nameless trifles into a New Foundling Hospital for Wit. Or is it to be taken for granted that we

understand an author's interests and opinions better than himself? What would Shelley have thought of the late eight-volume edition of his works in prose and verse? Even an exhaustive one of Keats might have been suffered to pass without his letters to Miss Brawn, which are not so interesting even as the letters of Burns to Clarinda, for those possess the importance of having been, in cataloguer's parlance, rigidly suppressed, and therefore partake of the nature of stolen sweets, although forsooth they are decent and dull enough.

A chapter might be set forth upon books which have been constructed by cunning literary artificers out of rough notes handed to them by persons of genius, whose talent lay somewhere at a distance from committing their great thoughts or discoveries to paper with a judicious and becoming regard to sequence and orthography. A worthy old soul died the other day whose speciality it was to serve up books for gentlemen whose learning did not embrace spelling and stops. But the present is a branch of the subject in which a jarring chord might easily be struck. For I could, an' I would, divulge the name of more than one volume of honest repute, which came to this chymical laboratory a chrysalis, and left it a butterfly.

There are few topics on which it is more perilous to enter, in the way of criticism, than Ballad Literature. All my literary friends, to a man, love and admire these fine old things, and many stand toward collections in a sort of fatherly relationship. Adverse remarks are consequently not to be made without excessive caution, nor even then without formidable risk. I have by no means in my mind the Political Ballad, which is distinct in its character and origin, nor such pieces as appear to have proceeded from an educated pen, like "Sir Patrick Spens" and "Hardycanute." I refer to the works of the merry minstrel, who was his own author, to the flexible legendary tale which, masterfully differenced, was dressed by Homers of other days to suit the circumstances of sundry families or individuals.

I have to confess that I have perused in my time passing much of this lore, and that I have laid down each successive volume with a sense of increasing despondency and astonishment. It may be predicated, according to my view, of these productions, *as a rule*, that they are as fabulous as the old romances without their wealth of costume and incident, as dull as the monkish

poetry without its antiquity or philological value, and as licentious as Chaucer or Boccaccio without their diction, humour, and plot. I am positively bewildered, as one advances more and more deeply into this labyrinth of edited material, at the *variae lectiones* obtained by some splendid good fortune (as it seems to have been thought) from oral recitation, the most treacherous of all sorts and sources of material; and the same not very remarkable story is related of a dozen different people with a few changes for the nonce. The compositions which, on some account or other, possess real importance, might surely fall within the compass of a moderate volume; yet I apprehend that a railway waggon would scarcely accommodate all that we have, scattered up and down, in this fascinating department of polite letters.

From the slips of the press and the sins of authors we are apt to turn to apparent heresies and solecisms on the part of the printer in his professional capacity. The publisher of the present day laments the decline in the public call for his commodities, unless he can weigh them out by the pound or the hundredweight, and he has sought a remedy and an escape in the production of new wares of a painfully worthless and ephemeral caste, or of the old ones in diabolically fantastic accoutrements. The plea of the manufacturer or draper may be that, if his customers will not buy a book, he must provide him with a toy or a gewgaw in book-form, and a modern Procrustes, who was excellent enough as a paper-hanger and as a writer of smooth soulless verse, served up to his obsequious clientèle a series of typographical and artistic abortions with a lordly indifference to propriety of circumstance and costume. Whatever honour may be legitimately due to such as at successive periods elucidated the lives and works of literary celebrities, the editorship of early writings is not uniformly or unexceptionally essential to their substantial appreciation. That mere archives should be presented with the minutest accuracy is not to be questioned; but the sense and spirit of our great authors were grasped, I take it, before the laborious scholiast and dull verbal critic interposed to elevate their fame by purifying their texts from the errors of transcribers and typographers. In the former centuries men discerned the merits of poets and prose writers without those scholarly aids, which, in spite of their enriching side, somewhat tend to overlay the original groundwork.

In the department of book-collecting we are confronted with two schools of personages, who distinguish themselves by a taste for the literary or bibliographical monuments of the past; that which seeks to encourage a study of authors or subjects, which have been improperly and even injuriously neglected, and that which makes it a speciality to concentrate in its own hands certain productions, of which time has grudged us more than a copy or two. If we scan the splendid catalogues of the principal private libraries of recent centuries in Great Britain, on the Continent, in the United States, we find the same aim and the same result: an imposing accumulation of matter in book-form interspersed with a more or less slender literary and intellectual seasoning, if not quite so barren as that prodigious mountain of Oxford and Cambridge verses on public occasions uniquely redeemed by Milton's "Lycidas"; and we are apt to turn away from the spectacle, magnificent as it may be, with a feeling that those libraries, which were formed on the principle of selecting, not what others wanted, but what the owners desired apart from rarity and rivalry, are the pleasantest to contemplate. But beyond and above both in their title to general gratitude and respect stand those, who have winnowed out from the entire surviving mass of type and manuscript the modest proportion likely to prove interesting or serviceable for all time, and who thus put letters to their highest uses, namely, the transmission and diffusion of knowledge. The fork is to be preferred to the rake. The normal wealthy virtuoso is no Heber, no scholarly judge and valuer of his possessions, but a misguided individual, who barter for his dollars all the treasures which he sees commemorated in catalogues as having perished, with a solitary exception or so, because, when they were plentiful, no one coveted them. The *caveat* has to be entered, however, that of matter committed to writing or to the press, it is an absolute *minimum*, which public institutions may not usefully preserve for reference or comparison. Private libraries too often savour of personal foibles. Our museums are neutral ground.

Art is not altogether exempt from attack on this side. There are, as experts well know, keen and interminable disputes as to the real authorship of pictures of the older schools. Whom are we to appoint to adjudicate on the respective works of Luini and

Da Vinci, between which it has been pronounced that it is almost hopeless to discriminate? Raphael and Correggio are usually viewed as strictly original masters, yet the saying goes that they were under the deepest obligations to Giotto.

We know how warmly and justly the masters of the Dutch school are admired, alike in portrait, landscape, and domestic life. Yet I could draw up long lists of works of undoubted realistic merit, which I have seen in the Netherlands, and which would be wholly destitute of context, if they should be transplanted to any other soil. The galleries of Holland abound to satiety with those imposing Corporation paintings, presenting groups of individuals, who are of as much permanent interest as the gentlemen seated round the municipal tables of Guildhall or Spring Gardens, yet of whose absolute correspondence with the living originals no one need entertain a doubt. These compositions are uniformly excellent, and you carry away from visits to their resting-places a hope, that the artist was handsomely remunerated for executing them. The question arises, whether this class of transfer in oils did not forestal the pre-Raphaelites in England. Of the two it is nature rather than art, which demands more than a crude facsimile.

It seemed almost superfluous for Mr. Sant, R.A., to evolve from his imagination a likeness of Napoleon as he looked at St. Helena, when we already had that in the straw-hat, which, despite the bizarre head-dress, strikes me as far to be preferred.

## XX

### BEN TROVATO

LIES are the powerful unguent which lubricates the wheels of Society; without which Society would not be what it is; in the absence of which it is a great question, if Society would not find itself very soon coming to a deadlock of the most serious kind. The truth is very well perhaps, so far as it goes; but the mischief is, that it is tame, commonplace, prosaic, plumbous, while ladies and gentlemen are brimful of romance, passion for ornament, love of laughter, affection for that quasi-Robin-Hoodish merry-making with the Long Bow. The world mainly subsists on fiction, and is only won round to the reality of a question under the strongest protest. You have immense difficulty in prevailing on it to go with you in discrediting the claim of Cervantes to be the pioneer in ridiculing the romancists, and of Bunyan to be the earliest writer of allegory in English.

That (as we learn at the last moment) very sadly maligned Signor Pinto, Herr Munchausen. Sir John Mandeville (great master of the imaginative school of prose), Mr. Barnum, Prophet Smith, Spurgeon the Apostle, were the authors who really understood to the greatest perfection the principles of composition, who knew best the string which pulls the hearts of nations, and who possessed the valuable faculty of selecting from any given number of straws the particular straw most calculated to tickle that impressionable being Mankind. The respective writers of the "Arabian Nights Entertainment," "Tom Thumb," "Howleglass," "Mother Goose," "Jack the Giant-killer," "Lazarillo de Tormes," were literary gentlemen of precisely the same stamp. Their genius was cognate. They were not like young Sparta, who had no objection to the sort of thing (rather having a preference that way, in fact), but not liking to be found out, as discovery was scandalous by statute. These others lied for the common good, not to let the world

mope. Lying may be signalized as the most ancient, the most widely diffused, and most imperishable of all Arts. But I must impose one proviso : your liar, to be exempt from legal process, should not be a dull rogue. To be at once unveracious and unamusing is an aggravated offence. I prefer a Gascon or even an American yarn to a Welsh pedigree.

At a stall in a Turkish or Egyptian bazaar a man parts to you with an article at precisely double its intrinsic worth, and lets you know that you have gone halves with him in robbing his father—a figurative personage in most Oriental bargains, who, like the carriage-and-pair in our genteel comedy, is always judiciously kept in the background. But here is a disciple of the vulgar school of falsehood, a mendacious egotist, a liar for his own paltry ends, a pusillanimous desecrator of matter-of-fact with none but the most selfish objects in view.

One of the old philosophical Greeks made it a maxim never to depart from the truth so much as in jest. He refused to tell a fib to his dearest friend for the joke of the thing, as persons who have credit for the most upright intentions now occasionally do. But that was hardly an average case, I take it; the fib had germinated even then; individuals of inventive genius were to be found in many departments of inquiry; Sparta was not the only school, where the fancy was cultivated; nor was Scylax a solitary type. That gentleman's sensibility, I suspect, was peculiar, personal. These delicate scruples were, if anything, rather the exception. Are they not so now?

There is something which makes me of opinion that the hero of Foote's comedy is a rascal of the baser species. He is a fellow with a mad lying vein, who strings his inventions one upon the other, till he makes a rope of them to hang himself; but it runs in his blood, was sucked into the man's constitution. He is a pleasant harebrained creature who, not unlike the younger Matthews in the "Liar," never looks before him or behind him, and gets out of one scrape by getting into another. He is constantly guilty of the most outrageous fabrications in order to serve some personal and usually rather undignified object. He wants the magnanimity and philanthropy of a true hero of romance. He lies to benefit himself, or because he cannot help it, and either way my sympathy with him is not large. Lying, doubtless, is a humour not to be



232  
treated with encouragement, unless it has the somewhat rare fortune to be associated with something like generosity of sentiment, handsomeness of intention, or grandeur of design. Take, for example, our ancient and long-lived acquaintance, him of La Mancha, if the wittiest, assuredly one of the least veracious, as he is one of the least translatable of knights-errant. No man, who has laughed to tears over the adventures and exploits of Don Quixote, was ever probably made worse by the flams with which the book is so bountifully spiced. There we get lies thick and threefold; but then it is all for mirth's, not mischief's, sake. Nobody is deceived, because nobody believes a word of it; nor for that matter do we of the Scandinavian popular lore, which finds its lowest level in the rather over-valued German stories of the Brothers Grimm.

The brilliant and dream-like legends of the East—the "Seven Sleepers," the "Seven Wise Masters," Ali Baba, Aladdin, Haroon-el-Reschid, and the rest, so far as we are enabled to study them in corrupt texts and imperfect translations: the myths handed down to us by Herodotus, Pliny, and Aulus Gellius: the fables of paganism, Circe, Calypso, Arcadia and its enchantments, the Islands of the Blessed, Charon, Cerberus: all the strange tales which are interwoven with the "Odyssey" and the "Æneid": the splendid and miraculous exploits of the heroes of Norse and Teutonic mythology; our own romantic literature, Arthur, Lancelot, Tristan, Isaie the Sad, Huon of Bordeaux, Bevis of Hampton, Palmerin, Amadis, Guy of Warwick, Torrent of Portugal (a kind of Jack the Giant-killer for grown-up persons), and the Seven Champions: Peridur, Owain, Geraint, and all the heroes of the Welsh Triads—all these are purely delightful, and make our old friend Munchausen seem pretty sober reading, especially when we come, in the "Arthur," to the monarch who proposed to fur his mantle with the beards of the kings his cousins, whom he slew in battle. Of Aaron the Righteous it is perhaps better not to know too much, lest we should be disillusionized. The fame of the book, of which he forms the central figure, was built up, before men began to be too clear about his personality and his period, or to be generally aware that he struck coins and corresponded with Charlemagne. Nor do I know that I should object to see a reprint of the *Contes Devots*, which have matured with age into a farrago

of humorous absurdity, whatever may have been the original aim and effect, and where, by the way, we meet with the exact counterpart, Mr. Barham, of your "Jackdaw of Rheims."

There are very few of the fictions, which arrest our attention and awaken our curiosity in the writers of the mediæval era and the Renaissance, which are not readily traceable to ancient sources. Sir John Mandeville was little more than a middle-man. But, on the contrary, the "Arabian Nights" strike me as pictures of Oriental wealth and splendour, and local costume, from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. Who agrees with Carlyle in pronouncing them unwholesome literature? They long wanted an expositor, and they at last found two in Burton and Payne. Carlyle well-nigh needs the same aid. Is he worth it? Yet even in the land of their birth during a vast length of time the "Nights" were viewed, not as unwholesome, but as futile, matter.

They appear to me the very reverse of a geographical expression, all these fanciful embodiments of a simple popular belief; the divine Olympian gathering, and all the other legendary superstitions of the antique world, with those of our own Britain added to swell the catalogue out to bigger proportions. The universal imagination is peopled with them, and in our mind's eye we study to shape out what their form and feature should by right be. They are as unknown as the algebraic  $x$ , yet go hither and thither, like the Fairy, whom Master Puck, sometime servant to King Oberon, once met in an Athenian wood. The old faith (not yet extinct) in preternatural agencies and superhuman attributes fostered these Arthurian myths, these stories of elves,

"That dance in circles all the summer night;"

these old wives' fables with the shallowest *substratum* of truth in them, yet, as truth is, undying; and so it is with the whole stock of our national folk-lore. *Perennis et fragrans*. It runs over with lies, like a witch's seething-pot: all the better for that! The day may not be far distant, when the modern school of scientific investigation will rinse out from our romantic and mythical literature all that is pleasant, and all that seems noble, and reduce it to a dead level. So, meanwhile, let us be merry with all the familiar phantoms!

## BEN TROVATO

As matters are now drifting, one can hardly feel assured that those were not better off, who never outgrew their boyish belief in knights, giants, and hobgoblins, and to whom Geoffrey of Monmouth stood in as excellent stead as Mr. Keightley or Mr. Freeman. But honest Geoffrey has not quite lost caste yet among the bookish sort; for I not so long since saw him commended for "the skilfulness of his delineations and the venerableness of his authorities." What has the world gained, prythee, by discovering that there was no Arthur, no pixies, that the "Arabian Nights" were not composed under the circumstances stated, or that the Æsopian Fables were no more written by Æsop than the Psalms and Song of Solomon by their reputed authors?—that Haroon-el-Reschid was as sober a reality as Queen Victoria? Our former faiths have been rooted up, and nothing half so agreeable given to us in exchange. Was it not a relief to find the other day, on the authority of "The Chronicles of Newgate," that if Dick Turpin did not ride to York on Black Bess, at any rate somebody else did on another? We cannot stand quietly by, and see all our idols broken :

*Sanctum et venerabile est vetus omne poëma,*

and there *Poëma* is in its largest sense. The poetry of everything save one is the primary element; the single exception is history. The poetry of history is only an euphemism for history falsified. Between history and poetry there is so little in common, that I confess I should like to see a broad line drawn between the two. Fletcher of Saltoun thought that he would rather make the ballads of a nation than its laws, but he mistook, if I err not, cause for effect. A people's ballads are not its history, but the consequences of its history. There are no ballads in any language contemporary with the occurrences which they describe. That mischievous invention, the historical romance, ought by good right to have been committed at its birth to the clemency of the common hangman; the influence of this fascinating medley of legend and fact (always with a balance in favour of the former) on historical studies and inquiry has been most pernicious. It is helping oneself to history with a silver fork; it is viewing the grand events, which have brought us to what we are, through kaleidoscopic spectacles: it is (quite seriously) the Life of the World in burlesque to get a hearing or a laugh.

The historical romance in prose as well as in verse has existed from all time. But it was Scott to whom it owed its actual form and place in our literature. His responsibility is a very severe one. Of the two, the metrical tale is for obvious reasons less to be reprehended; and "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake," nay, "Harold the Dauntless," are as good reading as many of the Waverley series. But the characters in a novel should be myths or types. The introduction of bogus historical personages into print, or, which is worse, into our poor degraded theatre, is silly and objectionable. How far preferable are Tennyson's versions of the Arthur Poems to his "Queen Mary," and the latter in the closet is a good deal better than on the stage. But both, I fear, are rather flattered portraits. The dramatist was pardonably anxious to do his best for a lady who, as one now understands, was a sort of distant connection. Tennyson was no more the originator of the Arthurian group of ballad or epic poetry than he was their improver. The Round Table series we seem to owe to men who in the thirteenth or even fourteenth century composed versions of these oral legends in metre or prose agreeably, not to the period to which the narratives, but to which the narrators, belonged. So we get the events of one period reclothed in the costume of another. I see no utility at the present day in the claim of a Breton duke to be a British prince, for the Arthurian cycle of Tales dates no farther back than the twelfth or thirteenth century, when Brittany and Cornwall were long under one feudal chieftain.

Enough has been said in disparagement of what the authors of this time call contemptuously the "dry bones" of history. But, instead of being too plentiful, it may be a question if these said bones have not been a little too scarce, and it remains to be seen whether the passion for ornament has not existed in all ages under one form or another to such an extent as to place it beyond the power of our own generation and any others to come to separate the *dry bones* from the *alto-relievo* laid unstintingly upon them, for harmony of effect, in satisfaction of the requirements of art, or from want of knowledge. Instances numerous enough can be given of the present entangled condition of historical literature, and of the strange, not to say prodigious, degree in which the most momentous episodes have been painted over, in technical phraseology, to meet the prevalent fondness for

## BEN TROVATO

dramatic propriety, and allay the popular hunger for *coups de théâtre*.

One great source of error has been, and is, the propensity which authors of every kind have to write epigrams in prose as well as in verse, to make points and round periods, so as more surely to hold an audience. They feel, no doubt, that tame realities do not answer very well, and that there must be salience, sparkle, glitter: pomp of circumstance: an ornamental background or bordering. The author is but a kind of market-man. The bookmaker has to know the bookbuyer. The playwright from the outset found it necessary to study theatrical effect, as Aristophanes in his "Clouds" introduced, not the true Socrates, but a shallow caricature.

No one more perfectly understood this than Macaulay, whose instinct, if not training as a special pleader and a rhetorician, domineered over his sense of duty as a reviewer and an annalist. Yet what could be expected from one, who pronounced the criticisms of Johnson, even when "grossly and provokingly unjust," excellent and deserving of study, provided, says Macaulay, that you take care to separate "a portion of valuable truth" from the alloy. What a process! and in the case of the more recent writer is it not equally imperative, particularly where he invites us to view through his kaleidoscope the evenings at Holland House and the noble host and hostess. Naturally enough we are told, I own, nothing of the orange or "Tom, stir the fire."

Virgil did as he listed with Dido, and Macaulay with Penn and Impey. If the accounts are not true, so much the worse for the truth! Such authors play at ninepins with public characters. But Dido was safer game than the other two, inasmuch as justifying documents are not within reach. But perhaps the most signal example of Macaulay's insolent nonchalance, and only not the gravest, because it was *prima facie* ridiculous and contemptible, was his ignorant view of the character and labours of the illustrious and unfortunate Marquis of Worcester, a judgment worthy of such a flimsy and flippant virtuoso as Horace Walpole.

A Spanish poet long since entered upon a vindication of Queen Dido from the charges which Virgil has made against her moral character. But this gentleman does not seem to

have found much sympathy, or indeed perhaps (out of his own country) many who have so much as heard of his endeavours, and the Punic princess must wait, I apprehend, till some virtuous washerman with Notes from the Archives of Carthage comes forward to tell us that the Maronian song has wronged the royal lady. Nothing short of a veritable State paper will do the feat—hardly that. I have to confess that for myself I should regret the reduction of the legend to narrow conventional lines from the broad quasi-Homeric standard of morals. Much of the interest in these remote traditions depends on the chiaroscuro light, through which we contemplate them. To be sure, we know too little about many personages, yet let us have a care, lest we should learn too much.

His “Lays” and his “History” are the best things of Macaulay that we have of the kind, and also the most parlous:

*Aleator, quo in arte est melior, eo nequior.*

It was perhaps a pleasant exaggeration on the part of the gentleman who avouched that he had verified all the references in the footnotes to the “History,” and that not a single one warranted the statement in the text; the critic might have gone a step farther in a different direction, however, and found the famous New Zealander forestalled in a well-known Venetian tradition of the Middle Ages. But even such poor stuff as Lockhart’s “Spanish Ballads” and Aytoun’s “Lays of the Cavaliers” does more harm than good. As poetry it is assuredly as bald, as void of inner sense, as a good deal of Mr. Browning’s metric prose; nor is it half so poetical as the “Italian Journeys” and “Venetian Life” of Mr. Howells; and if the authors had been so well advised as to shake themselves loose from rhyme, we have to consider the distressing likelihood that their prose would have been on a par with their verse, and their narratives as faithless as Macaulay’s without being so picturesque. To write reasonably well in verse is no easy task, as any one can see, for instance, who glances at the indifferent versions of Horace, with which Sir Theodore Martin has done so much to spoil his excellent monograph of the poet.

I beg, for my own part, to be excused from crediting a syllable of what we have read about Cadmus and his little

## BEN TROVATO

army cheaply organized out of a serpent's teeth (though, to be sure, Mr. Keightley explains the matter satisfactorily and prosaically enough), or about Sappho killing herself for love, or about that very disagreeable and eccentric person Diogenes the cynic and his tub (which was, after all, only what we call a *box*), or about Hannibal and his successful experiment in vinegar. Omar did not burn the Alexandrian Library, for the good reason that in his time there was no library to burn; perhaps this collection has been as absurdly exaggerated as Petrarch's basketful of volumes given to Venice partly under the advice of his friend Boccaccio; for the poet, if he gave all that he had, is scarcely likely to have possessed so many paying guests as an English mechanic can now buy for a sovereign. For your Book rightly chosen and at convenience multiplied, is an asset soon returning prime cost, and yielding perpetual interest which it is beyond the power of any one to redeem or reduce. There is no other hospitality like this.

The allusion to Petrarch and Boccaccio prompts me to notice the almost unbroken link between the ancient Roman writers and those, who succeeded them, who pressed the same ground, who breathed the same atmosphere. We are accustomed to except to the licence of the earlier Italian novelists and playwrights, and we forget that they inherited the warm and passionate blood of those, whom we designate the classics, blended with that Celtic element, which lent additional grossness to sentiment and language, and which we find in its rankest luxuriance in the literature of France.

During a century or so English folk were satisfied with reading Goldsmith's "History of Rome." But all at once sprang up Niebuhr, who was adopted even by Keightley as a new light and leader; and Goldsmith was discarded. Then followed Mommsen, who threw discredit on Niebuhr, and finally Sir George Cornewall Lewis dissented from both; and to this very moment no one can say more than that Goldsmith's book is waste-paper, and that the question is a very difficult one, so far as the earliest annals of the city are concerned.

We all know what a vexed question the first introduction of typography has been and even remains, how it has been claimed by Germany, Italy, and Holland. But in any case the art of printing, as we have inherited it, is less an invention than a

development of that of writing and of the formation of letters and alphabets, and the real question seems to be, in what region the initiative of block-books was taken, and where the principle was extended by the substitution of movable or detached for immovable types. The conception of the latter goes back to the Chinese, and was familiar to the Romans. But to neither did it occur to carry the process farther.

It seems that, if the truth is to go for anything, Æsop and Richard III. must part with their poetical humpbacks, and the former even with his "Fables," Belisarius with his beggar's cloak and staff, and Galileo with his grievances.

The common engravings of Cromwell dictating to Milton the letter about the Albigenes, of Columbus and the egg, of Canute rebuking his courtiers, and of Boadicea in her war-chariot, are pictorial aids to history of more than dubious worth. The rhetorical passage, where Macaulay makes Cromwell threaten the Holy See, that, if more mercy were not shown to the chosen people of God, the English guns should be heard in the Castle of St. Angelo, seems to lack documentary support.

The notion has long prevailed among scholars, that the nursery tale of "Jack the Giant-killer" was in its inception an apologue exposing the tyranny and rapacity of feudal landlords, and the present writer has glanced in his "Studies in Jocular Literature" at the reasons, which tended to localize the *habitat* of that fascinating and persevering tradition. But as seigniorial oppression was ubiquitous, we must not be surprized to find that there are, at all events, two distinct versions of the adventures of the "Giant-killer," and that in the one, which is not so familiar to the young, the scene is laid, not in Cornwall, but in the North of England—a circumstance which offers this collateral point of interest and importance, that it links the history of Jack to a certain extent with that of a famous outlaw and the cause which he professedly espoused. At the same time, there is the peculiar difficulty attendant on ascertaining the time and chronology of this little romance, that no early texts of it are known to exist, and while an edition of 1711, published at Newcastle, contains the north-country version, and enjoys the honour of priority, there is no testimony in favour of it being the oldest beyond our present state of information and not least the significant absence of any mention of the work in the "Stationers'



Register." It probably shared the fortune of many other stories of social origin, and remained an oral record down to a comparatively recent date. It dealt with an evil of great antiquity and long duration—the hardships suffered by the commonalty, including the class, from which Robin Hood came, from the owners of the soil and its appurtenances.

When we hear of Ptolemy the geographer, it is to admire the eminence which is claimed for him as such, and to note the high prices which are asked for first editions of his book. Yet his views were based on a fundamentally erroneous idea, since he put the earth in the room of the sun as the great motive agent of the universe, of which, of course, the writer knew little.

A very slight acquaintance with the topography of the spot ought to be sufficient to extinguish the glories of Thermopylæ; and it is much the same thing with the Arcadia of the poets, alike ancient and modern. One of the coldest parts of Greece was not very happily chosen as the theatre of *al fresco* pastoral life; nor were the early romancists, who laid the scene of delightful adventures in Persia, very correctly acquainted with that region—not, at least, with the Persia which we know, unless it might be a few favoured spots.

Much of the extravagant outcry and invective against the ancient Venetian government has been found, at the eleventh hour, to have arisen from an iniquitous forgery and hoax. But what, you will ask, about those Invisible Three, those of whom Mr. Rogers sings? Why, they were pleasant persons enough, and were prepared to receive everybody who had business with them, and if they were not to be seen, it was only when it was out of office-hours. I hardly know which of the two is the more delightfully melodramatic, the French history of the republic by the late M. Daru, or the "Bravo of Venice" by the author of the "Monk," the latter an inconsiderate transfer to Italian soil of the "Abellino" of Vulpius; but assuredly both are superior to the vulgar and disgraceful trash from the pen of Sir Conan Doyle.

I think it is high time that the "Ana," as they are called, should be set down at their true worth. They have always seemed to me to be assemblages of fictitious and silly anecdotes, the principal fruit of which is to mislead inquirers. The self-same story is applied to a dozen different persons in as many

of these foolish collections. "*Contemptor suæmet vitæ dominus alienæ*" is alleged by the biographers of Henry IV. of France to have been an axiom delivered by that prince; but unfortunately Seneca had anticipated him. Was it an original saying even in the latter case? is the question. The Dog of Montargis is an incident in the history of France a century and a half older than the reign of Charles V., to which it is commonly attributed, or rather it was a well-known story before that monarch had arrived at the honourable stage of "*un haut et puissant prince, âgé d'un jour.*" Lyly's "Euphues" has been taken to be a type; but he borrowed the notion from Ascham, who might have found it in Plato, who heard it in conversation with Socrates. It is true that Lyly expanded an abstract principle into a literary mode.

There are cases, no doubt, where the same idea occurred to two persons at or about the same time without any communication or direct indebtedness. The father of Montaigne suggested, in 1533, a Barter and Exchange, a scheme not carried out down to quite modern days, and in the same century Bartholome Laffemas desired that the French government would establish in every centre a general bureau and agency for public convenience. Perhaps the Montaignesque project was less comprehensive, and did not go beyond the accommodation of persons prepared to exchange one article or species of property for another. It was perhaps never communicated beyond the family, till the Essayist mentioned it in his book. Patient investigation has done something already, and will do a great deal more, as time goes on, to throw new lights on history.

What havoc has been made of Whittington's story by play, chap-book, and ballad! He must have possessed a truly marvellous acoustic faculty to have distinguished the music of Bow Bells on Highgate Hill, must he not?

It is wonderful that the Anglo-Gallic wars of Edward III. and his successors have never been set at their proper value. When the disunited and poverty-stricken condition of France in the fourteenth century is considered, how much glory are we entitled to claim for such victories as Créçy, Poitiers, and Agincourt? and those who can see below the surface will not be inclined to estimate Henry V. much more highly in his capacity as a king than in his capacity as the boon-companion of Falstaff. When are we to have a "History of England"

## BEN TROVATO

drawn up from the best materials and of reasonably modest compass? And, again, in studying the struggle between the French and the Burgundians in the fifteenth century, we are not accustomed to weigh the extent to which the military and physical superiority of Charles the Bold balanced the arts of Louis XI. and the territorial preponderance of France. At the same time, it is ever the quality and province of genius to detect the weak point or part in an adversary, just as an archer of old would make his arrow or bolt find the more vulnerable places in the coat-of-mail or the jointed armour. It has been successively said of Frederic of Prussia and Napoleon I., that they owed their triumphs to the imperfect organization of their opponents; yet was not their own equally so, and did not the illustrious Corsican achieve some of his grandest exploits with troops, who were poorly clothed, poorly fed, and poorly armed? Let us rest assured, that in whatever age either had lived, the distance between him and his contemporaries would have been much the same.

Alas! how little will perhaps be left to leaven the dull monotony of modern existence! Is it wise to look too nicely into matters—into associations, which form part of our inheritance? Is not truth what we imagine to be true? At least it were not good to depopulate our Walhallah. We must look to it, or we shall discover ground for thinking not half so well of the Chevalier Bayard, the brave Orlando, our own Richard Cordelion, and many more, whose figures occupy the foreground in our thoughts, and keep the impersonal world, when we will, at mid-distance. There is that affecting scene, where Philip Augustus, on the morning of the battle of Bouvignes, removes the crown from his royal brow, and placing it on the altar, exclaims, if among those gentlemen present there should be one worthier than he, let him take it up and wear it! But Guillaume le Breton the historian, who was behind His Majesty on this memorable occasion (as it would have been), does not appear to have heard anything of the kind fall from the king, and it appears that if any one there thought himself worthier, he refrained from making his opinion known.

What evolution mentioned by Darwin is more singular than that of the modern Freemason? The genuine reality *was* a freeman of one of those great masonic gilds, which arose in the

Middle Ages, and in gradual stages of development lent its earliest forms of artistic accuracy and beauty to architecture. The cathedral and castle builders of the mediæval period might have found the germ of much of their work in those sepulchral structures of the Celtic or Saxon era, which they had the opportunity of beholding in their original perfection and proportions, and which we can see only in ruins, or are too late to see at all—except in the way of miniature survivals in stone-yielding regions, where the so-called Cyclopean masonry is reproduced on a dwarf scale.

Perhaps, of all heroines, the most unceremoniously used has been Joan of Arc. For some hundreds of years the world, however reluctantly, entertained a deliberate belief, that this gallant lady ended her days on a hurdle in the market-place at Rouen; and most of us recollect how, when we visited the locality in former days, we were fond of re-peopling the old-fashioned square, and fancying how it might have looked on the day when the Maid of Orleans perished at the stake. But then all at once up started Somebody declaring that it was no such thing; that the heroic girl was not burned as supposed; that she lived to be old, and died a natural death. People hardly knew what to make of this insipid and rather distressing anti-climax; it was generally thought that the matter would have been better left as it was, for there was a kind of feeling that it was not quite the thing somehow—less dramatic, perhaps; but the gentleman produced the burial certificate!

The curtain, however, falls at this point, only to rise for a third act. It turned out, in the long run, that the gentleman who was wanting to prove everybody else in the wrong had confounded the true Joan, excusably enough so far, with a counterfeit Joan, a make-believe virago who, some time after the event, finding that the public, or such portion of it at any rate as suited her purpose, was troubled with a very short memory, gave out that she was *ipsa eadem*, the very same about whom an incorrect report had gone abroad. The select audience to which she appealed swallowed the tale like so many blacksmiths, and the Maiden-Warrior, unexpectedly recovered from the flames, lived and died in peace, and would have never been heard of again, if the accidental disinterment of her burial certificate had not assisted the gentleman already referred to to the discovery of his famous mare's nest.

So we get back at last, after a good deal of trouble, to the original starting-point, and must leave poor Joan just as we found her, the ill-fated victim of superstition and prejudice, burned Heaven knows why, and buried Heaven knows where.

There is a case somewhat parallel to that of Joan of Arc in the history of the production of the "Imitation of Christ"; and I am encouraged to touch on the question a little by a quite recent authoritative declaration, that who is the author of this book is obscurer than ever after three centuries of the keenest controversy. It used to be rather a matter of notoriety among scholars that the real writer of the "Imitation" had been robbed of his due by a man who was no more than a copyist. A class of error, to be sure, which is not yet perfectly obsolete; but it was commoner once, because copyists, of course with no intention to misguide, were in the habit of putting their names to MSS. which they had transcribed for use. Jean de Gerson, Chancellor of Paris, who was alleged to have been the actual author of the "Imitation," was a native of Rheims, and took his name from the village where he was born in 1363. He was engaged, for the most part of his not very long life, in polemical disputations and theological studies. He helped to keep the paper-manufacturers busy for many years in more senses than one; for, as the correspondent of an archæological publication points out, there were several editions of his works, including one in five volumes folio. This excellent gentleman, however, let it be known, objected to the idea that the paper-makers were heavily in Gerson's debt, for the very reason that there were so many editions of the same Gerson. A noble *non sequitur*. Rather cousin-german to the case, where some one explained that the six days of the creation were not days really, but long periods, yet omitted to state whether this chronological elucidation was applicable to the seventh. The expounder of Scripture had proved too much or too little. The only labour of Gerson's pen, however, which lived was the treatise *De Imitatione Christi*, which was long undiscerningly ascribed to somebody else. His sole chance of immortality was nearly snatched from him by an early admirer—Thomas à Kempis. This was a settled thing, then; and one was tolerably sure to find in all erudite catalogues and dictionaries the intimation that Thomas à Kempis was nothing more than an honest translator,

and possibly not so honest neither. The world crossed out the name of à Kempis and wrote over it that of the long-lost original genius, to whose inspiration it owed the masterpiece, and every one was pleased that Gerson had got his due except Gerson, to whom it no longer signified. But anon the learned German, who has become as much a part of our literary constitution as Macaulay's schoolboy, steps in, when the whole question was set at rest, and no rational creature cared a feather how the matter really stood, and proves to us that Gerson was all that we had thought à Kempis to be, and possibly rather worse, and that all catalogues and dictionaries must be at once reprinted, lest the public should continue in the dark too long about a theological treatise, of which the principal interest now-a-days appears to be its uncertain authorship. Its life is sustained, like the "Letters of Junius," by a mystery; for there are more learned Germans, God knows, than one, and the next who comes on the scene may be a Gersonian. Yet perhaps the book, dull as it undeniably is, may be thought to have one saving clause—that really fine and acute thought, that we can hardly aspire to shape other men's lives as we would, when we cannot shape our own.

By the way, I once asked an acquaintance, who had bought a recent English version of the *Imitatio*, what his motive might be, to which he ingenuously replied, that he had heard a great deal of the beauty of the style. I hardly liked to hazard a remark, that the charm had been thought to reside in the original Latinity.

The case of Jean le Houx of Vire in Normandy, author of the famous drinking songs, which we know as the *Vaux de Vire*, is not so hard as it may at first sight appear. Le Houx, a professional man, to whom literature was a mere occasional recreation, seems to have lived to a ripe age among the men whom he loved and among the scenes which inspired his muse; and to have died a true son of the Church, and doubtless, as he suggests in his own epitaph, a lamented patron of the taverners of his native town. During his sojourn on earth his verses chiefly circulated in MS. among his intimates; his name gradually dropped out of notice; and even his individuality was merged in that of Olivier Basselin, a fuller of Vire, and another Bacchanalian composer. During a century and a half or so the anacreontics of Le Houx passed muster as the

## BEN TROVATO

work of Basselin. But modern research has restored him to his full honours, and he has become of the immortals. He led an agreeable existence, and won the esteem of the Church by his bounty, and that of his fellows by his jocund and sociable nature; and the temporary neglect which he suffered after his death was the loss of others. There is no living thing in Vire but his celebrity, of which the modern Virois is profoundly unaware. The precise converse is predicable of Walter Mapes, whose festive and goliard verses are to a large extent of very doubtful authenticity, simply for the reason that it has been the fashion to affiliate upon him all, or almost all, the remains of that class of composition which have descended to us. This sort of literary consolidation may be convenient, but it is unsatisfactory and unjust, not because it robs others of whom we know nothing, but because it tends to convey an exaggerated impression of Mapes himself, and if we allow that it is not an honour for an individual to be resolved into a generic term, a disparaging one; for among these supposititious works there may well be some, which he would have deemed unworthy of his pen.

"A Dissertation on Roast Pig," by Charles Lamb, is described by him as borrowed from a Chinese MS. lent to him by his friend Manning. The statement was long credited *faute de mieux*, and then it was not only proclaimed that the germ was to be found in an Italian poem by Bistonio, but that in the *Bibliotheca Eliana* there was actually a copy of it. This double discovery put back the Chinese MS. on the shelf; but there is a third scene. For it appears that, ages before Bistonio, an Arabian romancist had accounted for the first knowledge of the virtues of fire in matters culinary in a thriftier way, when he produced the earliest example of fried fish by casting a piece into a flame caused by the casual friction of certain reeds. We are consequently remanded to the East, and have merely to strike out China and put Arabia in.

The licentiousness and extravagance of Charles VII. of France passed into a proverb. So much for proverbs! seeing that this luckless prince was, in point of fact, particularly serious and temperate, and as to prodigality, heigho, where was the money? A popular song of the time even insinuates that His Majesty was at one period of his reign so poor, that the royal *chasseur*

declined to leave without the money a pair of boots he had had the honour of fashioning for His Majesty's royal feet.

Louis XI., with whom English readers ought to enjoy a more than usual degree of familiarity, has had terrible injustice done to him. He is misrepresented in history, play, and novel. Scott painted him for us as he thought he was. The late Mr. Kean portrayed him as he thought he might have been by possibility—if he had been Mr. Kean. We do not know but that a new edition of “Quentin Durward” would gain something in interest by having as a frontispiece a likeness of Mr. Kean as Louis, and beneath, in the lower centre of the plate, the ferocious ogre, Tristan l’Hermite, brandishing an axe in one hand, and supporting the other on the iron cage invented by his royal master for a cardinal of his acquaintance! That his royal master did not invent it; that Tristan, so far from being this *Hercules alter*, was a poor, infirm old man, incapable of lifting an axe; that Kean’s Louis XI. was a piece of gross melodramatic extravagance, and that Sir Walter’s Louis XI. is merely a new edition, of course with additions, of the common *printed painting* of this exceedingly ill-used king, would be quite immaterial. “*J’ai fait mon siège*,” as the French abbé said—we beg pardon most humbly, *is said to have said*. Louis XIV.’s “*J’ai failli attendre*” was either a nonsensical invention, or a little bit of slack-baked royal fun. *Mon Dieu!* I’ve nearly had to wait! What is more improbable? when His Majesty is known to have been (considering everything) a model of meekness and forbearance in private life, and to have been in a passion only twice—once, when he seized the tongs to strike Louvois, on hearing that he had given orders for the sack of Trèves, and the other time, when he boxed a lackey’s (some authors say, a scullion’s) ears for stealing a biscuit.

It almost seems desirable, while so much is being done to dissipate old illusions and to rectify venerable misstatements, that an effort should be made by those who have best facilities, to ascertain the precise truth about Louis the Well-Beloved and his *Parc aux cerfs*. There are those who will have it, that the real circumstances were not so flagrant as they have been represented. Let some one therefore let us know what those circumstances were. A pity that so sweet a prince should lie under a false imputation! But, alas! the abominations and brutalities



## BEN TROVATO

had not their inception, but much rather their crowning point in him. It was a heavy hand which the Valois and the Bourbons laid on poor unhappy France. The odour even of Henri le Grand does not wax sweeter the more we learn about him. He, too, did his part toward the crisis—the deluge.

The annals of the French Revolution and Empire abound with similar examples of plausible fabrications handed down to us as genuine anecdote or narrative. Much that goes under the names of such men as Mirabeau, Sieyes, and Talleyrand, not to mention Napoleon himself, is absolutely fictitious, and any new writer on this subject will, if he does his duty, sift all these idle *mots*, which can only tend to falsify characters and events. What Desaix said at Marengo, and Lannes at Essling, may be securely omitted in the next history of France under Napoleon Premier, whom it is edifying to see the modern press describing as the “Great,” no longer the “Corsican Ogre,” just as Paul Jones has only just been recognized as the Father of the American Navy; and we have the authority of M. His, contemporary editor of the *Republicain François*, for passing our pen through the Abbé Edgeworth’s “*Fils de Saint Louis, montez au ciel!*” How hard a man, and a good man too, will lie for Reasons of State, or on Patriotic grounds, we all know supremely well from living examples, without any testification from dumb Passed Grand Masters. These sins against matter-of-fact are not to be debited to the private account of the Right Honourable This or That, but are, as it were, On His Majesty’s Service, and all correspondence respecting the same should be sent to his official address.

“Summer has set in with its usual severity,” once said Horace Walpole. Others had virtually said it before him; it is a remark apt to originate in a climate like ours. Byron is credited with having first made the joke, however, which is perhaps not so odd as that in one of his Letters Charles Lamb claims it for Coleridge, who has also set down to him the similitude, found at all events in Diogenes Laertius, of a pure mind, surrounded by corrupting influences without contamination, to the moon shining on a dunghill unpolluted.

I am afraid that the process of expurgation will have to be extended to the history and biography of every European country, including our own. There is one point, to which I solicit respectfully the careful attention of the author of the

voluminous "Life of Milton" or (if he is no more) his assigns. Nothing of the kind is probably better known than the common engraving, in which the blind poet is represented dictating "Paradise Lost" to his daughters. Could those gentlewomen write? The sole survival of a MS. of the epic is a transcript by an ordinary copyist of the First Book. It has no appearance of having been written by a lady.

"Paradise Lost" and "Paradise Regained" occupy in our middle literature a rather peculiar position. If one were to ask the majority of educated men and women of the present day what they thought of them, their reply would be that they were very grand poems. If one were to proceed to inquire whether this majority had read them, the reply would be that they had not. A few might have looked into them, or seen extracts. Milton is less read than Spenser or Chaucer, nor is he so readable. In writing these two epics, he made the Scriptures serve as an outline or lay-figure, and filled up the details from his scholarship and his imagination. The two parts of the "Paradise" are, of course, as pure works of fiction as "Robinson Crusoe" or "Gulliver," but unfortunately they are neither so entertaining nor so instructive. They bear to Holy Writ the same sort of relation that the historical novel bears to ordinary history. They may be described as noble examples of literary skill and ingenuity, with an abundance of passages which we shall never be tired of quoting or seeing quoted; but their legibility will go on decreasing in an exact ratio with the rise of modern opinions.

They were never calculated for popularity. At the time of their appearance, they were very probably viewed by strict churchmen as daring innovations; we have learned to think differently. So far as mere fame goes, the author has no right to complain, after all; but to secure in the long run a large body of sincere admirers he should have either produced a paraphrase of portions of Scripture in the manner of Dr. Watts, or have extended his striking conception of Satan, which he seems to have throughout borrowed from the New Testament, to the entire undertaking. If it were not for the Devil, whom the poet borrowed from the popular prose story of "Faustus," "Paradise Lost" would be duller even than it is. It is dull enough, not so much from a want of mastery on the writer's part, as from

the unsound and unmanageable nature of his theme, and from the recent admission of theology to a place among the progressive sciences.

But let us bear in mind one point. The Miltonic conception of Satan corresponds pretty well with the idea, which we form of him from the Scriptural episode of the Temptation. In both places he presents himself as a noble and grand character, a splendid dramatic embodiment of the spirit of evil. On the other hand, however, it is obviously improper to regard him as anything worse than a defeated and fallen minister, whose power had grown dangerously equal to that of the Almighty, and whose ruin was solely due to his overweening ambition. So far the two portraits agree. All the modern sordid and vulgar wickedness is an aftergrowth fostered by ignorance and prejudice.

The two "Paradises" were anachronisms in sentiment and intelligence when they first saw the light, and how unspeakably more so are they at present! It was a widely different matter, when the Cilician Aratus wrote his "Phænomena" three centuries before Christ, and made Jupiter the source of all. His view coincided with the general opinion.

I have said that the reputation of Milton will probably decline on literary or critical grounds. William Winstanley, his contemporary, thought that it would do so, because he had seceded from the Stuarts. For my own part, I honestly wish that this writer had come down to us merely as the author of his "Juvenilia," which are his masterpieces: "Comus" and "Lycidas" (both written before he was thirty), the creditable "Elegy on Shakespear," a yet earlier work, where we recognize, as in other cases, the fruit of Elizabethan studies, or in other words an unacknowledged loan from somebody else, and the noble Sonnet to Lawrence. But had he done so merely as the author of the two "Paradises," he would have passed only in my judgment as a sublimer Watts.

In his "Lycidas" the writer has shown the tyrannical force of genius, like Tennyson in "In Memoriam," in compelling us, whether we will or no, to believe that his hero was much such another as himself, and not, as we know full well, a very normal university graduate.

There is Pope. His Pastorals are neat and pretty imitations

of Virgil, and his Epistles are interesting and manly enough. But one is referred to his "Essay on Man" as his great achievement. It strikes me as an anachronism, even for the time, when it appeared, like "Paradise Lost"; it breathes the air of a provincial parsonage; its thought was the thought of one, who possessed the faculty or trick of putting into metrical shape the notions prevalent among the least informed or the most prejudiced people of the age; it ran counter in its sentiment and spirit to the views of the most distinguished and enlightened of the poet's contemporaries, Bolingbroke included; and it must share by degrees the fate of the Miltonic epics. A great writer, who aspires to be permanent, must leave his own age behind him, and rely for sympathy and appreciation on such few at his side, who do the same. He should dedicate his work *Amicis et posteris*, and write off the printer's bill as a bad debt.

Burns appears to supply a case, where a fine manly character—if a trifle too prone to toddy—has been elevated into a national hero *faute de mieux*. The Scots do not read him; but they celebrate his memory just in the way most congenial to the poet's own views and tastes; wherever his excellent compatriots foregather, he is a Toast and a watchword, to which the Southron can offer nothing exactly comparable. In the United States he is collected—that is to say, rich Americans outstrip each other in paying childish sums for the Kilmarnock edition; and the more he gives, the greater he! Many of his pieces are exceedingly gross, quite sufficiently so to satisfy the frequenters of a night-cellar, while one or two are delightfully picturesque—as good as some written this side the dividing stream, of which the Englishman does not find it necessary to make so much.

I am pleased to see that attention is being gradually drawn to the subject-matter of the present essay. In our own history, there is hardly an *enfant terrible* who will not meet at last with his champion and whitewasher. Was it not in the *London Magazine* about 1820, that a certain author set the ball rolling by re-editing the case of Guido Fawkes, and enrolling him among our intending, but frustrated, benefactors?

Our late sovereign lord Henry VIII. has found a friend in Mr. Froude, and Bishop Bonner in Mr. Green, who paints the bloody persecutor of our schooldays as an amiable humourist. Under the hand of a third author King John emerges in entirely new

colours, and we lay down the account of the monarch's life and reign with a feeling of regret that it is too late to offer him an apology in person. John, who is so indissolubly associated with Magna Charta, is supposed to have given offence to the monks, who retaliated in monastic fashion. One of the old Dukes of Normandy, the father of our Conqueror, was distinguished as "Robert the Devil," for no better reason probably; as the same honorary title, a century or two later, when he and all about him had been securely forgotten, was conferred on a certain King of Sicily and Jerusalem, whose name unluckily happened to suit the exigencies of the case. But the Norman at all events, is depicted as having forsaken his ungodly ways, and made his peace betimes with Mother Church; and so he had not so long to wait for an advocate as his English descendant.

Not all of us are aware how unjust we have been to that Corinthian Periander, who till yesterday (so to speak) was a man, with his dark side so turned to us by unfriendly judges, that scarce any one believed how immensely his faults had been exaggerated and his merits ignored.

The reputation, which any great author, artist, or soldier has secured, resembles a case in Court, which has been proven beyond appeal, and is not assailable without immense labour of forethought and risk of censure. Yet there are those, who persist in re-opening the evidence and seek to vary the verdict; who in the face of established traditions, perhaps based on a too obsequious acquiescence, are disposed to run the hazard of submitting new views, even where the ground seemed too firm and too sacred to be broken. Should Columbus be robbed of his hard-won renown, because he owed his first inspiration to the papers of his father-in-law?

Is it not much under the same circumstances, that Julian has come down to us as the *Apostate* (not the *Apostle*, as Lord Kenyon once had it) and Constantine as the *Great*? The Protestants talk about bloody Queen Mary and the Papists about bloody Queen Elizabeth. The Romanists conferred on the latter the *sobriquet* of Jezebel; Knox paid the same equivocal compliment to Mary. Nor is the work of rehabilitation confined to imperial and royal personages. Every year seems to bring some shock to our historical convictions, to the Gospel of thought in which we have

been brought up. This is in the long run as it should be of course. Careful restorers have scraped off the black paint laid by Macaulay on the characters of Penn and Impey. But the old material has not been thrown away. It has been pressed into service for new purposes ; it has assisted Mr. Cordy Jeaffreson in his more autotypical likenesses of Byron and Shelley.

## XXI

### ROYALISM OR SOCIALISM

"And kings are only officers in trust."—DRYDEN.

"Cela était autrefois ainsi, mais nous avons changé tout cela."—MOLIÈRE.

"Les grands ne nous paroissent grands, que parce que nous sommes à genoux. Levons nous."—PRUDHOMME.

"The age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe."—"HAMLET."

PHILIPPE DE COMMINES, the intimate friend of Louis XI. of France, startles us a little at the outset of his "Memoirs" by saying: "En luy et en tous autres princes, que j'ai connu ou servy, j'ai connu du bien et du mal, *car ils sont hommes comme nous.*" These words were penned about four hundred years since; but we have to recollect that the writer, in looking at mankind, probably regarded only such as himself, and left out of account the great majority. On the other hand, who so thorough a democrat at heart as Shakespear; yet he was careful to put his own sentiments into the mouth of some character, since plain speech *propriâ personâ* was not then, nor till long after, diplomatic.

An English nobleman has a house in Stable Yard, St. James's, and to the door is attached a brass plate bearing the words "Earl of Warwick" upon it. Over and over again, as I have passed by, it has struck me that here was a powerful illustration (if one happened to be wanted) of the decay and disappearance of the Feudal system among us.

The times are changed. The old Neviles would as soon have dreamed of riding on an omnibus, or articling their children to attorneys, as of setting up outside their gates a brief of their name, style, and quality. Down at Warwick, where they know him, his lordship does not find it necessary to employ this advertising medium; but in London, so it is, that a lord, unless he is something better, must wear some public token of his dignity, or take the consequences. All Londoners are equal on the pavement and the road. The privileges of the Upper House

do not protect a man from being jammed between two carts in Cheapside, or from being mobbed on Primrose Hill. He will not save his hat by producing his patent; he can only call a policeman, which is just what anybody else can do.

The actual root or germ of the trouble, from which we were destined so long to suffer, is traceable to a period, when we were a younger people, centuries before such a thing as the House of Hanover existed. The majority of us were complacently satisfied with our environments, or, if they were not, they lacked the skill or the courage to change them, where change meant toil, anxiety, sacrifices, perhaps impoverishment, perhaps death. There were such as were happier without Magna Charta, without a glorious look-back, without the refinements of life, than we are with all these. There were such as could, and did, pass from cradle to grave in absolute content, destitute of the blessings of personal freedom and security, ignorant of all outside the strait orbit in which they moved, indifferent to their own nature and their own rights. It is the handful of hot, restless spirits, who have stood forward, and made us what we are from age to age, and "from precedent to precedent," who have borne every imaginable penalty and privation to enfranchise and advance this nation, and to whom we owe, that at the present moment we are not under the fatherly care of the Georges, nay, of the Stuarts.

When we had the happiness to be governed by the Georges, a princess of that house tried to shut up Richmond Park. John Lewis, the Richmond brewer, of whom there is a portrait in Crisp's account of the place, brought an action against Her Royal Highness, and won it. Here was *lèse majesté* and rank high treason! The public kept possession of the park, but the poor fellow was ruined. In those days one was expected to pay for the honour of going to law with royalty.

It had formerly fared a good deal worse with assertors of rights and even of opinions. In the relatively free period of the so-called Merry Monarch, a London goldsmith was carried to Tyburn and barbarously executed for speaking disrespectfully of that prince.

Perhaps Mr. Lewis was considered rather fortunate in being let off so easily under the circumstances. I dare say that that precocious young lady, the Princess Amelia of Hanover (the *Mealy* of her intimates) would have preferred the matter not



resting there, but at all events there it did rest. This was a sort of beginning of the end. It was applying the shears rather rudely to the high hedge which separated the cattle from their drovers. It was a bold essay at levelling distinctions. The nation had put out a claw, and had drawn blood. Since those days we have made a new translation of the phrases "Our Prince" and "Our People," which are no longer understood to mean what they did. Burdett, Horne Tooke, Peter Pindar, Paine, Cobbett, Hone, the Hunts, and an ancestor of mine, have left us the fruit of their careers. But existing personages, whose names will easily occur to every one, want only the power to act over again the parts of the eminent creatures, who flourished under the Georges. Their talons would soon reappear. Let us keep the bit in their mouths. Going back and looking at these old landmarks is at times a curious study enough.

A late Lord Townshend was a very fair representative peer, not in a parliamentary, but in a social sense. He did not carry his rank written upon his features. He had nothing feudal about him. He was not "every inch a lord," but might pass for a gentleman anywhere, and was a person of the best intentions. He spent his time between the streets and police courts, playing a kind of Dogberry part, and apprehending "vagrom men." Had his lordship lived three hundred years ago, when the duties of stipendiary magistrates were not so well understood, he would have gone a different way to work with these sturdy beggars and strong rogues, I will take the odds; he would have strung them up first, and tried them afterward :

"First hang and draw,  
Then hear the cause by Lydford law !"

He would have played the part of a Malatesta, whose doings make, in the hands of M. Yriate, a "Story of Rimini" which materially varies from that of Mr. Leigh Hunt.

But unluckily this will answer no longer. We are more anxious than in those good old days to know the reason why. Throwing eggs at a chimney-sweep, or kicking a butcher's boy, is finable under Acts in these cases provided, to say nothing of graver matters; and there is no Statute of Exceptions in favour of persons "*haut en naissance, en vaillance, en amour*," whose names are printed in capitals in the peerage and baronetage. Those

gentlemen who are prone to such diversions must pay the assessment. It is not so long since the brother of an earl was fined ten shillings and costs, and told that he might go to prison for a fortnight if he did not find the money, for driving too hard, and this was before the magistrates of his own county ! It read to us like a codicil to Magna Charta ! But have we not seen many such codicils executed from time to time ? After all, these ancient feudal dignitaries, this Old Nobility, about which we have heard so much that is discouraging and unsavoury, promptly grew tolerably keen chapmen, and bargained excellently well for the lands, which the Crown gave them—being hardly the Crown's to give, as we have begun to fancy ; and moreover the grants involved equivalents, which have expired. There is not even a specious *Quid pro Quo*.

At present we are face to face with a different social phenomenon, a sort of new aristocracy lifted up from the middle class in judicious profusion, to strengthen the hands of the tottering and superannuated Upper Chamber, and to check the dangerous ascendancy of the *bourgeoisie*. The Society organs and those devoted to Sport keep us fairly well informed of the character, development, and personality of this diplomatic movement ; and we see how the supplementary members of the House of Lords and the recipients of subordinate dignities, down to a humble C.B., are selected with a view to win over to the monarchy persons of fortune or parts in a wide variety of callings : military and naval officers, heads of administrative departments, merchants, bankers, manufacturers, and others—even, here and there, an author or a newspaper proprietor—any one, in short, who, if he was not secured, might throw his weight into the scale against the Royalists. Those Society papers form an advertising medium for the Illustrious Obscure of both sexes ; but unluckily my lords and my ladies admit to the pictorial columns their pets—the occupants of their stables and kennels, and the owners generally halt some way behind. Indeed, the latter are between a trying double fire ; for the artist goes occasionally to town, and sketches a literary or theatrical celebrity, who offers a potent intellectual contrast to Lord Augustus or Lady Violet. The golden age for noble lords and ladies of high degree was when there was no cheap press to familiarize the community with their lineaments and morals ; for what does the copy-book say ?

I can hardly understand what the gentlemen of the shires were about when the general penny post was introduced. Why, they should have fought against it tooth and nail; for, from their point of view, it was certainly an inopportune and unfortunate measure. It broke down one barrier more between the people and their betters. It extinguished franks. It was one of the things which taught the poor man to believe that he had no betters—a most dangerous doctrine. That a duke's autograph in the corner of a letter should come not to be worth as much as a penny likeness of the reigning prince, was really too bad. It was making persons of quality too cheap in the eyes of the Helots.

A late Earl of Derby—not the last—would have made a very creditable figure at the court of Charles I., and would have carried with him through life (he did, as it was, so far) a very vivid sense of the classification of society and of the gradations of the human species. But he should not have lived to witness the set-in of the Long Parliament, or to have received the invitation from Cromwell to take a place in his Upper House by the side of Lord Hewson or Lord Fleetwood! He would have withdrawn himself into the country, have despaired of the age, and have spent the close of his life in writing the history of his sovereign. His lot fell, as it happened, on quieter times, and he translated the “Iliad” instead, where there are only, as is proper, two sorts of people—the Chiefs and *Οἱ Πολλοί*.

He was not always what we knew him. He began the world with a different kind of lay-religion altogether. There was no doctrine too advanced to please him once. He was an ardent Liberal. There is a story that, at some political club during the agitation of the Reform question more than seventy years ago, he jumped upon the table, and proposed a refusal to pay taxes as the only and best way of settling the difficulty! This was in 1831 or before, when the blood of the Stanleys danced and tingled in his veins none the worse for the marriage of one of the family with Miss Farren the actress. He afterward sang that old *Ille ego qui quondam*. The wind blew ere long from a different point of the compass. But, unless his lordship had a very short memory, the episode must have come across his mind now and then, when he was in a mood to muse, and must have jarred tiresomely with his maturer political opinions.

He must have recalled the time when he and the late writer of the "Revolutionary Epic" were volunteers in the same service, soldiers in the same corps, both armed to the teeth, as they gave out, to fight the people's battle for them! Years came and cramped him, body and soul. His joints and his politics grew stiff together. He flung away his early love, and reunited himself with the author of "Vivian Grey," who, by-the-bye, republished his "Epic" just toward the last in order, if we did not misunderstand him, to demonstrate that the first edition was printed from an incorrect copy. He was so anxious indeed to suppress it, that he put into his pocket the copy, which belonged to a certain Club.

In the latter part of his life, the late Lord Derby's impetuosity did not entirely forsake him; and he occasionally broke from restraint in a way rather perplexing to the great party with which he had the honour to be connected. At a most provokingly inconvenient juncture, he told the Catholics plainly what he thought about the emancipation question. It was letting the cat out of the bag at the wrong moment. It was the eve of a general election. But the old spirit of the Rupert of debate, or *something like it*, was rampant, and I suspect that he would hardly, to save half-a-dozen pensions, and twice as many votes, have kept his views to himself about that or anything else. I could name some of his colleagues, who would not have been so nice. It was midsummer madness, from a business standpoint.

Lord Derby was a staunch Tory and an indifferent tactician; and these two circumstances satisfactorily explain why he never succeeded in politics. His nativity was mistimed. He was much too good for his own party, and was unfitted by temper and associations to act in harmony with any other. He would have been a creditable disciple to Strafford, and hand and glove with Laud, if he had been their contemporary. He would have sentenced Prynne, and have sat to Vandyke. He would have saved Charles I.'s head, and James II.'s crown—if he could. He would have set up his back against Dutch William and against the Hanoverians, and have exchanged letters with the Old and Young Pretenders, as long as it was safe, if not a little longer. Had he lived later, he would have spoken in abhorrence of the French Revolution and in favour of Marie Antoinette almost

## ROYALISM OR SOCIALISM

as well as Mr. Burke, and he might have tried to shew that the downfall of the Bourbons was a misfortune to France and a check to civilization.

Two of the most democratic publications of our day were Carlyle's "French Revolution" and Thackeray's "Four Georges." The former was a fine dissection and exposure of the old aristocratic *régime*, of which we had already heard in "Past and Present." Thackeray laid bare, with the help of Hervey and Walpole, the laughable illusion about the illustrious descent of the House of Hanover. Such writers are ugly customers, whom it is usual for Governments to buy up. In fact, the author of "Sartor Resartus" had a baronetcy offered to him, and to his eternal honour declined the handsome proposal. He was a Conservative in the best sense. The same worthless tribute was actually accepted by the late Poet Laureate. The latter presumably had the title in consideration of what he had said on behalf of King Arthur and his modern representative; it was to be given to Carlyle from fear, peradventure, of what might happen, if he took up the later English history in the same spirit in which he had taken up the "Life of Cromwell" and the "French Revolution." I do love him, as I love Dickens and Thackeray, as glorious apostles of Anti-Flunkeyism. I devoutly wish that I had years and power to write a real history of the villainous Stuarts—Mary of that ilk included.

The *beau monde* does not make much of a figure in his writings, or in those of Dickens and Thackeray, and if exalted personages are introduced it is only in a quizzical or disparaging way not formerly licensed by superiors. But what gall and wormwood Cobbett's "Weekly Register," Hone's "Tracts," and Peter Pindar's squibs, must have been to Pitt, Liverpool, Sidmouth, Fox, and the rest of them! Those, who read accounts of these men in ordinary biographies, read only half the story. There might be, at all events, cross-references. How little of the deserts of such persons as Castlereagh, Ellenborough, North, do we hear in the "Dictionary of National Biography"! How much of the heaven-born Pitt, the witty George Rose, the genial Charles Fox, the gay Sheridan—next to nothing of their ignorance, their rascality, their greed!

To obtain the whole truth about all the grand coalitions of Windbags and Moneybags, which have afflicted and cursed this

poor country, you have to go to other, and no doubt vulgarer, books. There you will perceive to your singular satisfaction how Great Britain has been pillaged and dishonoured by that triplicity of foul abomination: statesman, lawyer, parson; and how thankful we should be to those, who at such sacrifice of their own welfare and fortune, swept away the wicked system, and founded a school of thought, which renders its return an impossibility. We have among us, and shall continue to have so long as the present parliamentary principle lasts, both fools and knaves (our political Scylla and Charybdis); but we have bidden an eternal farewell to those of the old type. Think what a really great people we must have been to have survived such misgovernment, and what a patient people, to bear even the amount of it which remains

Any man is entitled to be a fool, especially if he be a lord; but his friends must not foist him on us as a public officer, as a responsible councillor of the Crown, for then he becomes a scandal and a danger to the State, and should be regarded as a person to be kept under control.

Cobbett may be disposed to speak too unkindly of Pitt, who stands out in favourable relief from his colleagues, since he seems, if a fool, to have been at any rate, like his sovereign, an honest one, although, as we look back, we cannot help regarding both as national calamities. Yet his criticisms on paper serve as excellent letterpress for the "Caricature History of the Georges."

The maidenly bashfulness of Tennyson was conquered, whisper it not in Faëry or at the Cock Tavern! His lordship ordered a patent and robes. He should have worn his old laurel-wreath over the coronet, to remind his colleagues—and himself—that, although he was a peer, he was also something a good deal higher and better than the latter-day nondescript patrician, who is neither fish, flesh, nor fowl. He came like the Sun among the vapoury meteors, like a Light into a dark warehouse. The atmosphere might, had he breathed it long enough, have asphyxiated him, transformed him into the similitude of his fellows, and made him lust to "drown his book," as the companions of Ulysses, amid the bewitchments of Lady Circe's court, forgot their former life. But that we should have lived to witness this grotesque anti-climax, this comical transfiguration!

"'Tis ridiculous for a lord," says Selden, "to print verses;" as Byron puts it:

"'Tis some praise in peers to write at all,"

and it could hardly be much less so for a man, whose whole rank and value depend upon verse-making, to take a peerage, unless he is summoned by virtue of his noble blood, his poetry notwithstanding, like Lord Houghton, whose humble offerings to the Muses, of which the *Westminster Review* expressed at the time so indulgent an opinion. Tennyson's position as president of the republic of letters seemed perhaps to the descendant of kings out of keeping, after fifty years' reflection.

Here was a case, if there ever was one, in which the refusal should have been as much a matter of course as the offer. Did not every one know perfectly well beforehand that Tennyson had only to hold up his finger, and the paragraph would go to the *Gazette*? The Minister's letter might have been inserted in the papers to convince the incredulous. Walpole's "Royal and Noble Authors" needed nothing more to crown the edifice. The century had already produced a Byron and a Milnes.

A lordship or the badge of some fantastic inarticulate order is perhaps a meet increment to the dignity of an ordinary official, who has rendered the public fair service in his particular sphere; but it is sheer wardrobe stuff or stage property to a man whose fame and station are regulated, not by the sovereign, but by the nation and the world.

One of the best points about Gladstone was his abstention from such futile and lowering distinctions, and it may to a certain extent be said of him, as it was once of an immeasurably greater man:

"*Il faisait des rois, et n'en voulait être.*"

O Mr. Carlyle, what would you have thought, if you could have been here, to have beheld your former fellow-commoner introduced to the Upper House between two other noble lords, one whispering precepts of self-possession, the other assisting to hold the umbrella over his head? What a House it has become, even since 1832, when Lord Tenterden declared that if the Reform Bill passed, it would be the shadow of its former greatness. One has lost one's old feeling about it, like the countryman who

declined to kneel to an image of St. Nicholas made out of his own plum-tree. It has come to this, that every peer must be content to stand on his own merits; he will be taken for what he is worth; the world will perhaps hardly care to ask or to know who his ancestors were. The descendants of those who fought at Hastings should really begin to seek better credentials. Had Tennyson lived, a second "In Memoriam" might have been "An Elegy on the House of Lords, by a Member."

Would Queen Elizabeth have knighted Spenser or created Shakespear Lord Stratford? Would their royal or noble kindred have dreamed of offering Chaucer a dukedom or Gower a seat at the council-board? No. Does it shew that her late Majesty estimated literary merit more highly than her predecessors that she made authors barons, where the others would not have given them spurs? Not an iota.

The whole proceeding lacked proportion and consistency. If the works of Tennyson are what his intelligent contemporaries judge them to be, he was too good for the present House of Lords. If they are not—if (for argument's sake) he was such another as Milnes or Lytton, the present House of Lords was no place for him. For they were lords of acres, and could shout single-handed, "Property, Property, Property," louder than him and his Northern Farmer together. But reconstruct the Assembly on the model of the French Senate, and ostracize two-thirds of the existing members, and it may be another matter. We have already copied some French fashions which we might have done better to leave alone; let us have a French Senate and a French Academy. Mr. Round has shattered some genealogical cobwebs; other experts have laid bare the slenderness of the pretensions of many, or most, of the old titled houses to be the actual representatives of the name and blood; and the compiler of "Our Old Nobility" has exposed the excellent methods by which these personages acquired their wealth and power. Not the cleanest of records!

In the case of Tennyson, the laws of propriety and common sense were absolutely and ludicrously violated. I would liever have heard that our poet had been made Perpetual President of the Cocked Hats, or had accepted the honorary diploma of the College of Preceptors. There, at all events, a certain plea of consanguinity or kinship might have been maintainable.



The craze or *lues* for titular or personal decoration is bred in the bone. It is common to the white man and the tattooed aborigo. His brilliant war-pigment, his plumes, and the architecturally waved lines which are traced along his countenance are as dear to the Mosquito Indian as a designation or ornament, infinitely less fruitful in meaning, even a button, is to an Englishman of to-day. But the passion is of immemorial standing, although there was always a school of dissent, an undercurrent of derision. Certain it is that the thoughtless multiplication of honours brings about similarly a *reductio ad absurdum*. "Abundance maketh poor," saith the proverb. A giant among giants is but one. It has come to this with us at last, that a French Academician is almost bound to be a more eminent person than an English peer, who is also a Knight of the Garter, but who is possibly nothing more besides than the son of his father or "the tenth transmitter of a foolish face." In conferring orders of merit, Elizabeth was wisely parsimonious; with the profligate and venal Stuarts set in the condition of things which we at present see in its rank luxuriance, and long before the issue of the first Red Book, a Jacobean satirist proposed the publication of "A Help for Weak Memories" to assist those desiring particulars of new peers. If the Register of Distinguished Personages grows much bulkier, it will swell into a sort of "Encyclopædia Britannica." It used to be the proud Aristocracy. Now forsooth is it not growing to be so, that the true pride has deserted its old friends at Court, and found a new home? Even James I. would have winced at the proposal to ennoble some of those who now sit in the Upper Chamber by special favour of his present Majesty; and James made it a direct source of income. We have grown so commercial, that in titles as in other goods the demand is allowed to regulate the supply. Spurs and blue ribbons have become commodities and mediums of barter. The Minister of the day need even now scarcely scruple to send down to Westminster a portmanteau of patents to carry or wreck a measure before the Houses, as Brougham threatened to do in the days of our grandsires.

The growth of democratic thought and feeling in England is unmistakable. It is no longer as in good King Arthur's days, "*Moult de couronnes, plus de vertus.*" But we have been accustomed to make our political arrangements piecemeal and

step by step; and let us all hope that we may do so still. This is one of the things which they don't manage so well in France, where in the famous '89 it seemed to be one step from *Le Roi très-chrétien* to plain Louis Capet. By timely and judicious concessions an acute crisis may be averted. But progressive administrative incapacity, commercial depression financial embarrassment, and dearness of food may at any moment accelerate the movement, and give it an irresistible impetus. It may come like a whirlwind or a rush of waters. For our big places are growing very populous with men, women, and children, who are poorer than they think they ought to be; and it is only for these to find leaders, who can explain to them that the classes above them are rich at their expense. Then we may have our own 1789. Let us wisely and generously meet the danger half-way. Even his most excellent Majesty, most commendable as he has proved himself, has more money than he wants, more palaces than he can occupy, more horses than he can use—all at the national cost. He is from us, not we from him. His and our truest friends are Education, Sobriety, Thrift—all plants of slow growth.

Meanwhile, we can at any rate afford to be magnanimous in the case of our fallen friends the Tudors, Stuarts, and Georges. Let us not call them hard names, because we can do so with impunity. Whatever may be thought of George III. as a ruler, he was a gentleman—the first of his family.

"A king," says Selden, "is a thing men have made for their own sakes, for quietness' sake. Just as in a family one man is appointed to buy the meat." It is not so, as later investigation shews and proves; but at any rate it is doubtless a choice of evils with us here, and the result of more than one experiment. When we set up a man taken from one of the great English families, we know what happened. When we tried a man of the people as it were, Oliver Cromwell, it did not answer. We were sick to death of the imperious Tudors and the imperious and paltry Stuarts. We called in, by way of compromise, a Dutchman, who had married a Stuart. Then we went in for a German, who was descended from that charming and inevitable family. A foreign dynasty has in some ways worked better than the old native houses, and perhaps we have no right to complain. The Hanoverians did not come till we invited them,

and, as Selden puts it, "a man who keeps a monkey must pay for the glasses it breaks!" The cruel and trying part comes where the monkey puts on a *nimbus*, like your lion on a Venetian coin, and chatters about Divine Origin and Hereditary Title. The occasional assassination of a sovereign is thought by some to be an excellent method of keeping the rest on their best behaviour. It is a species of political phlebotomy. The ancient Athenians once distinguished two tyrannicides by erecting statues in their honour, and forbidding any citizen thenceforward to bear names so revered.

What a sorry time our grandfathers had of it under those Georges, and the fanatical satellites who did their bidding, and the swarm of costly fry, which the third of the line graciously billeted upon them! You may read to your content and more about the four of them in Thackeray and others. What consolation or indemnity can it be to Lawrence, whose Lectures on Physiology and Zoology, only so far back as 1819, were proscribed and suppressed as immoral and unchristian, that their teaching is at present accepted not merely as a matter of course, but as actually behind the times? What, again, does it profit Shelley, that his memory is now respected by that same university which expelled him, or that, as a tardy reparation for contemporary neglect, his works are now ridiculously extolled? Just about the same time it was that Jeremy Bentham's "Church of Englandism" was interdicted by the Attorney-General, and that the proprietors of the *Examiner* were prosecuted for an alleged affront to the Prince Regent, who, in a letter written by a Frenchman in 1815, figures, not as Adonis, but as Silenus. But since then leading organs of the press have used even stronger language without a message from the authorities. In England, as everywhere else, the Government lags behind the educators of the people in intelligence and information; it obeys, instead of guiding, public opinion. Less than a century ago, Darwin would have been put in the pillory for writing the "Origin of Species," and the common hangman would probably have disposed of the writings of Huxley and Tyndall. Nearly everything, which surpassed the comprehension of those in power or in possession, and threatened to shake their seats or to meddle with their vested interests, was met by stringent severity or with scorn. The Official and Professional

Minds are prone to ignore such matters as have not been stamped current in the proper quarter; and so it has been right away from distant times under successive dynasties. If certain illustrious names in literature, science, and art were not part of the national property—the best part—the Annals of England down to the passage of the first Reform Bill might be rewritten as the record of a savage people and their savage oppressors and spoilers. Nay, there is no lack of men still, who would vastly relish a relapse to this old political Adam, to the Golgotha which lies happily behind us; and there are members of both Houses of Parliament, and more especially of both Houses of Convocation, who would joyfully help them—*if they dared*, as we full well know from the dastardly and barbarous behaviour of a late Lord Chief Justice of England in that infamous case exposed in no measured terms by Buckle the historian. The discoveries of science and the diffusion of knowledge are inimical to the Church and the Monarchy, yet inimical to them only so long and so far as they fail to keep pace with human Thought and Experience.

What a revolution in public feeling had taken place between the appearance of Sir Walter Scott's "Waverley" and the scenes amid which that romance is laid! and the development of opinion down to the present time has made at least equal progress. It is less than eighty years since Ellis inscribed his "Original Letters," and Thoms his "Early Prose Romances," to George IV., Leigh Hunt's "Adonis of fifty," in terms of adulation worthy of the worst days of the worst Stuarts. To approach the sovereign for the time being with a due measure of homage ought to be the desire and aim of every properly constituted mind; but we are not likely to forget what these Hanoverians were before we took them as a last resource into our service; but I presume that I do not err in asserting that no author with an average share of self-respect would condescend at present to attach to his book the fulsome and mendacious epistles which introduced to the world of letters the names of Ellis and Thoms. These gentlemen played their cards more shrewdly than Cobbett and Paine, the Hones and the Hunts, but they played a simpler and less ambitious game. They merely played for berths:—

That Ellis was ignorant of the Jewish bargain by which the Royal Library, formed by George III., passed into the hands of the nation, it is impossible to suppose; yet he has the enviable courage to tell His Most Sacred Majesty that "the larger portion of them (the Letters) came from that repository which YOUR MAJESTY has been graciously pleased to enlarge and enrich with the donation of the Library collected by Your Majesty's Revered Father:"—but this is not all; for he adds that it is "a Gift greater than any which has been bestowed by any Sovereign upon any nation since the Library of the Ptolemies was founded at Alexandria." It was probably the earliest intimation afforded to the world that the Ptolemies did bestow their library upon their subjects, but, of course, this part of the business was a mere *non sequitur*; and with regard to the Alexandrian Library or Libraries, while it is unquestionably the fact that the present state of information upon the subject is of quite recent growth, it is odd that Ellis should have compared the alleged gift of George IV. with a gift which was still more supposititious, and the value of which he was as incapable of determining as we are. For if there is any point less doubtful than the others concerning this matter, it surely is that a grossly exaggerated estimate has been formed of the extent and importance of the collections of books made at Alexandria at different periods.

The editor of the "Early Prose Romances" is little more than an echo of Ellis; he, too, was a courtier and in a small way a successful one; but his dedication has the merit of being somewhat briefer. By a curious infelicity he succeeded in embodying in a few words the exact reverse of the truth, as we judge now, and as all honest men judged then. Mr. Thoms, let us recollect, however, was very young, when he expressed his belief in the interest taken by George IV. in the history and literature of the nation, "which YOUR MAJESTY so happily governs."

Doubtless, an ample assortment of similar curiosities might be discovered. These works happened, however, to fall in the way; and they served well enough to illustrate the tuft-hunting side of the literary character some two generations ago.

Formerly nations were what their rulers and masters (with the aid of the Church) made them; now in Great Britain, at least, the ruler for the time being is what the nation makes him or her. The old order is reversed. It is *Nos et Rex Noster*.

The spirit of revolt against monarchies and oligarchies had its rise, I do not know how many centuries since. There was in the old world a constant recurrence of crusades against tyranny of various complexions; and the tenor of the teaching of Christ in the New Dispensation is in the direction of communism. But in comparatively modern history one of the earliest documents, so to speak, in favour of the popular side in life and government was the "Dance of Death," which reduces all ranks to a stern equality in the closing scene.

The majority of kings betray their consanguinity to the rest of us when they ascend the steps of the throne; in having wild oats to sow, old associates to discard, new leaves to turn over. You cannot expect Homo Rex to be nothing more than a pulseless form with a crown and a glory, a jack o' lanthorn reflecting the light of those who put him where he finds himself. He is the father of a family—perhaps of more than one, as well as of his people, and who has so many friends? He is human, and never so happy as when for a few moments he can doff his uniform, as good Bishop Corbet did his gown and his hood. We are not merely obliged to have members of our own species to preside over us, to hold, as it were, the balance; but owing to constitutional exigencies we are often precluded from selecting the best, and we have been known not to refuse even an indifferent *Dei Gratia*, unless he was very bad indeed, just as we tolerate a feeble Ministry from dread of a worse one. A foolish king has, after all, something to recommend him, for he is apt to leave the serious business of the State to his betters; but we cannot long bear the strain of a weak ruler and a weak executive.

Lovers of ease, like myself, rejoice in an inexhaustible succession of personages who are prepared for a consideration to officiate as kings or administrators of some sort or other, down to the herald and the court lacquey—those fowls in dazzling plumage—and we do not too nicely scrutinize their motives.

Suppose that an index typographically graduated by the permanent value to the world of its rulers in successive ages were to be compiled, *diamond* would suffice for the majority of imperial and royal individuals, who have trodden the stage for their hour, and fulfilled their parts in misgoverning, plundering, and keeping high festival at the cost of their fellows. A king or an emperor, or, an emperor-king, is such another as any one

else, save in so much as he is made higher and greater by his people—and his costumier. Unless, which is gravely improbable, he is a distinct Unit, the wonder of centuries—an Alexander, a Cæsar, or a Napoleon—he shines with borrowed or reflected light, like a shadow on a curtain. He lacks official individuality. He belongs, like his majesty of clubs or spades, to a set, which is not complete without him, and without which he is not so; which performs its revolutions round him, like so many satellites, and has mysterious and bizarre canons of nomenclature, precedence, and toilette on a principle cousin-german to the splendid imposture of Freemasonry. What a droll homily on all this pompous extravaganza, this sublime flummery, is the passage in Payne Collier's "Diary," where he speaks of going into a room at Windsor with the Duke of Devonshire, and seeing William IV.'s shirt airing before the fire! The human affinities of your Magnitudes and Altitudes set one considering. Their working suits resemble our gala clothes, and when the theatrical properties are laid aside, Homo waxes distinctly visible to the naked eye.

What Shakespear says of Shylock, or rather what he makes Shylock ask, might prove immediately applicable with a little change: a sovereign has eyes, hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions. He is fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as the rest of humanity. If any one should desire farther elucidation on this particular point, I refer him to a passage in Montaigne, which is almost too uncivil to quote, or to that royal leveller, Lord Hamlet, who pictures the ignoble uses to which the dust of an Alexander might be put, and leads us to understand, that the carcase of a tanner is more lasting than that of a king. *Dei Gratia* is sadly too like ourselves—not by any means the best of ourselves—to enable us to put faith in the *nimbus*, the spirituality, especially since these divine delegates have been so much in the habit of laying their stage dresses aside, and mixing with mortals, as if they were of them.

There is, forsooth, but one clay and one kiln for all, and sovereign princes are as they are made. If all those in Europe were cut off at one blow, a new crop would spring up in their places, neither better nor worse than those who went before—

just as good as their Employers chose to fashion them, or just as indifferent as they durst shew themselves. The Intellect and Labour of the world are the lawful lords paramount of it, and it is their function and right to choose the superintendents of their affairs, by whatever designation they may distinguish them: their blame if they choose them ill. The King and the Kaiser of the more modern type have evolved from the old *Dux* and *Imperator*; and the military commander has exchanged his laurel crown for a gold one, and his sword for a sceptre. His subjects and he have taken each other's places. It is his turn to be on his best behaviour, forsooth, is it not? Yet pray forget not that the claw still lurks beneath the velvet; the Tudor eye is still upon us; let us thank our stars that the Tudor grip has been withdrawn.

We are in mid-stream between two constitutional systems, and before the new, and possibly final, one is settled and consolidated, many fluctuations may be expected.

The last seventy or eighty years have witnessed immense improvements in our political and social institutions, and many foul wrongs and abuses have disappeared, or have undergone modification, under various circumstances—usually under popular pressure. The sorry condition of affairs disclosed in "Our Old Nobility" has at any rate been amended. Certain malodorous houses retain their ill-gotten belongings; but they are not likely to add to them, or to recover them, where they have been lost, and must be content to furnish material for a new edition of the "Vicissitudes of Families."

The historical precedent set by Richard II., when he threw himself into a novel situation, and volunteered to lead his people, in order to avert a crisis, has had its echo in the sedulous and tell-tale eagerness, with which august personages have within living memory sought to identify themselves with every popular movement, and have proved more than gracious to those whom their not remote predecessors would have spurned like dogs. The Crown and the Court have grown wondrous kind. The Levee and the Drawing-room have become—well, a little hackney. The Crown is surrounding itself with the foremost and most influential members of all callings, not merely for the sake of strengthening its own hands, but of proportionately weakening the aggressive and belligerent force of Socialism. It is a



sagacious movement, and neither inopportune nor premature. Will it save the Monarchy? Or does not that depend rather on the preservation by the Middle Class of its brain-power and its capability of holding the financial capital of the country? So long as it does, the British Empire may continue to prosper; when it ceases to do so, that Empire will perish. The Crown and the Aristocracy, and the operative classes, are under the protection of those, whom they may regard severally as their inferiors or their equals. The British Empire and the Middle Class are convertible terms.

A king or a queen, as a constitutional head-gear, with his or her responsible councillors, of whom bad enough are the best, are necessary evils and burdens. We live—most of us—only to earn wherewithal to buy food, clothes, shelter, and protection from each other; and this protection is designated Government, which is by one man or by a body of men, taking their fees for doing what we cannot individually do for ourselves. This king or queen to-day is no longer a maker of men, but is a creature of human fabric, adapted to suit his or her place in a system. If we might have some ado to dispense with them, how much more would they have to dispense with us, in whose absence and without whose sanction they are nought—less than a door-handle is to a door? Yet on our side we have ampler duties and needs growing out of this ampler freedom; and let us pray that our country may some day wake to find itself in the glorious possession of an adequate Executive Faculty and Force. It is no true and safe Government, which is not recallable by the Governed. He is no latter-day king, who may not, on reasonable ground shown, have his seat declared vacant, and his crown taken from his head.

A constitutional sovereign is absolutely nothing more than the acting manager of a nation, and in him is vested and personified the national majesty, but minus the *Dei Gratia*, since the donor cannot give what he has not got. The principal cannot transfer to his agent what he does not possess, and in the present case the agent can shew or prove no independent grant. A crown in rudimentary political life was a military symbol; at present it is a general one; but only a single individual, chosen out of the community, can wear it. The majesty of a particular man or woman is a conventional phrase and figment. There is

no such matter—not even such a special nativity as was anciently ascribed to the king-bee. The one, whom we recognize, becomes *ipso facto* Majestic, whether the wearer of a crown or a straw hat. *Ours* is the Majesty, *Ours* the Empire and everything that is in or of it. Kings and queens have merely what we have given to them in trust or *ex officio*; and what we have given we may take away—we have ere this taken away.

There is an inherent proneness to licence and abuse at either extremity. The mean is difficult to preserve, especially since Parliament (as it is constituted) has begun to lose its prestige and balancing weight, and the crown is left more free to manage the public by tactful and taking methods. But at the same time that very circumstance and necessity demonstrate the widely changed relations between a ruler and his compatriots, who have become his subjects, only so long as terms of mutual accommodation endure. At his trial in 1649 Charles I. was sharply reminded that when he took the oath in 1625, he made a bargain with the nation. His Majesty had forgotten this.

If the Royal Family reads the History of England in the eighteenth century in any work worthy of the subject, they ought to feel gratitude toward those, who have so laboriously and successfully educated them in better ways, and on the lines solely capable of rescuing them from destruction. Yet consider the reverse of the medal. During ages we, as some of our species still are, were at the mercy of savage tyrants, and it is not a proverb of very hoar antiquity, that “kings who are good are called gods.” A king, however, is the creature of his subjects, before he is their master and oppressor. If our ancestors have smarted under the lash, it was one of their own construction. A ruler is what his subjects make him, or allow him to be. The happiest state is where they are each other’s servants and friends. Kings have to be carefully trained, if they are expected to answer their true purpose. Some of them are beginning to emerge really fine characters from the modern factory.

It cannot be too distinctly understood or too carefully weighed by the middle class, that the very cry for the increase of means of popular enjoyment is a political trap to keep the poor poor, or even make them poorer. Even our existing rulers and law-givers, modified as they may be by reacting circumstances, and comparatively circumscribed as they may be in

their power for mischief and oppression, discern the immense gain to them and their friends through the inflated expenditure of wage-earners and the narrow margin of surplus after all paid, if there be any at all—if there be not a balance on the wrong side. On the contrary, a frugal and thoughtful commonalty would soon prove a formidable element in the Constitution; but the two conditions must co-exist and be mutually helpful. Gracious condescension and affability are extremely winning and impressive in the eyes of many; they are at all events a homage to the claim of the nation, which pays for all, to a share of regard and consideration. But the price at which we buy these amenities must not be lost to sight, nor the source of all this overflowing *bonhomie*; there are those, who will see the day, when a good deal more will be thought hardly unreasonable. The twentieth century will accomplish some surprising problems, and will mark a new era in the history of the Blue Book and the Red Book.

The disciples of pseudo-socialism commence by ignoring the fundamental interdependence of all human societies, particularly of those constituted on modern principles, and perceive that their fellows, their superiors and sovereign inclusive, are living at their expense, without taking into account that they themselves are doing in a proportionate degree precisely the same thing. When the balance is occasionally readjusted in regard to power and emoluments, it is readjusted agreeably to this indefeasible law of systematized civil life and economy.

It is extremely difficult to settle under what category such a personage as Count Tolstoi ought to be ranked. He is a rich man, who says to poorer ones, "Come to me, and share with me my super-abundance," and he practically gives away nearly all his ample revenues. In other words, he makes it possible for a large number of people to live without working for themselves. This is hardly Socialism, nor is it a form of benevolence which is apt to prove permanently beneficial. The diminution of immediate distress may be good; but, reduced to a system and a creed, it involves the diminution of self-help and individual freedom.

Federalism or a Federation of English-speaking States, not on the Swiss model exactly, will be the ultimate issue. What is called Imperialism is an electoral phrase and cry. Throughout

Europe a new order of things, more consonant with real human happiness and dignity, may overtake Royalism, before it has done much more harm, and put an end to the ridiculous and expensive masquerade. We have slowly drilled the Crown into something more becoming and more tolerable; but a good deal remains to be done.

## XXII

### THE THOUGHT OF OTHERS

" . . . And you, who seek to give and merit fame,  
And justly bear a critic's noble name,  
Be sure yourself and your own reach to know,  
How far your genius, taste, and learning go ;  
Launch not beyond your depth."

—POPE.

"The truth is, that the conduct of a journal, the two great objects of which are to create a great sensation, and to assail the existing order of things at all points, is no task for a very good-natured man or a sturdy moralist."—*Lord Dudley's Letters to the Bishop of Llandaff*, 1841.

I CONCLUDE that criticism must be coeval with the world ; but what description of thing it may have been at the very first setting out is as yet problematical ; a mighty riddle, which has its key, perhaps, in some parchment palimpsest, or marble, or writing, dormant all these ages in a buried city to be made visible by-and-by.

The ancients had *their* antiquity, which we may suppose to have been regarded by them with a share of the same curiosity and reverential affection which we cherish toward all the prior generations which we see accumulated behind us. They respected their ancestors, even worshipped them ; but they did not examine them and their works through telescopes or magnifying glasses, or lay down exact bases of comparison.

As for ourselves, we have grown somewhat more discriminating in our judgment of past times. We cast a more scrutinizing eye over remote persons and events. It has become a question whether the ancients were not after all very much the same as we are. By help of bas-reliefs and other microscopic media, we have succeeded in dwarfing antecedent eras, till we begin to wonder at those who looked up with admiration and awe to the classic epoch. Latter-day researches into Old World history have been a gain in an obvious direction ; but they have rooted up the early superstitious worship of the unknown. The Ciceronian maxim :

*Præcis credendum*, has parted, I fear, with some of its virtue and force.

Of criticism, in our sense, there was a great deal more, if I am not much mistaken, among the Greeks and Romans, than there had ever been before. But their taste was more a contemporary and current taste than ours. They were fond of reviewing passing men and affairs, and of discussions upon the literature and arts of their own time: but they had not the interest which we feel in the older monarchies of the world. They relished the broad realistic and coarse reflections of every-day life, as they were put on the stage from season to season, by dramatists, who sacrificed all higher considerations, like most of their latter-day followers, to immediate effect and success. The Assyrians, the Persians, and the Arabs had not the same measure of value in their eyes that they have in ours. It did not occur to them to investigate the sculptures of Nineveh, or the mystic symbols found upon the monuments of the Rameses. An Assyrian inscription or an Egyptian hieroglyph awakens a keener curiosity in the breast of a Londoner of the twentieth century than it would have awakened in the breast of the most cultivated Roman or Athenian, and if he is only even a person of average information, he is better acquainted with Egyptian archæology than the subjects of the Ptolemies. The objects which he may have before his eyes lay under their feet. We feel at least as near to the occurrences narrated in the Old Testament story as Rome and Athens were. The customs, manners, sentiments, and opinions of those remote and extinct nations are more familiar to us than they were to the countrymen of Demosthenes and Cicero. We could tell Herodotus much about the ancient state of Asia of which he was ignorant, just as we could add to Strabo's information on the condition and aspect of Italy before the Romans, or find something about Vesuvius and Etruria that would be new to the younger Pliny; and the same may be predicated of the ancient Jews, who seem to have known or cared less than we do about the peoples, whose civilization was immeasurably older than their own, and who occupied a region comparatively of easy access from Jerusalem. We know more about the Greek and Roman poets than many of those among whom they lived. For we enjoy the advantage of an always lengthening perspective, and of holding literary evidences, on which their eyes never rested.

But, on the contrary, to the compiler or compilers of the "Iliad" we seem to lie under obligations of a different and far weightier character. From whatever sources he or they derived the material for the epic, the latter remains at the present hour what it was in the eyes of the scholars of Greece and Rome—a stupendous literary monument, of which we know little, to which we have nothing to add, while every day we learn to place more implicit faith in the writings of the historian of Halicarnassus, and to be sensible of his claim to our apology, in common with Marco Polo, Pinto, and Bruce for having impugned what he had—what they had such superior means to our own of knowing. After all, it seems that writers and workers of high rank have less relationship to the age in which they happen to move than to ages, whose estimation of them may be loftier and truer, yet must be more or less hypothetical and speculative.

The fable of Tereus and Progne was a piece of antiquity in the time of Anacreon, and that agreeable writer probably accepted such tales with the same sort of good faith with which Plutarch accepted the traditional accounts of Romulus and Theseus, or our own Elizabethan ancestors those of Arthur and his Knights. The old school of biographers and annalists were made of much the same stuff as Livy and Diogenes Laertius. Their pages are crowded with myth and hearsay. We miss altogether as a rule the personal knowledge which proved so interesting and valuable in the case of two men so different as Plato and Cæsar, and the critical insight which yielded so rich a harvest in the case of Mommsen—a coat of romance, which long remained impervious, overlaid the sterling substance. Now at last after all these centuries we begin to view through a clearer focus the ancient Roman story—nay, and the Greek, too, in spite of many intervals of imperfect light and information; and how much of the old romance fades, how much utterly vanishes! We find a selfish sort of relief in the discovery, that the ancients possessed, like us, a far larger number of capable adventurers than of heroes and patriots, and some of us have to demolish our idols, and become disciples of the New Learning, to revise our estimates of Marius and the Gracchi, even if we decline to accept the notion of the elder Cato about Socrates, whom the worthy Roman evidently treated as a flippant and troublesome *doctrinaire*.

What Livy was to his contemporaries, the monkish historians

became to the times which succeeded. Xenophon, Thucydides, and Sallust were unusually fortunate in selecting subjects for treatment of which they lived within view or within a measurable distance, and the historian of the Peloponnesian War offers to our consideration and sympathy a case, where a man, very slightly the junior of Herodotus, brought to his work a novel principle of critical selection. How ready we should be to barter away for a few facts a whole world of hypothesis and conjecture ! The roughest sketch of the every-day doings of Petrarch by his intimate friend Boccaccio would be worth Mr. Campbell's Biography an hundred-fold ; an actual glimpse of the man Homer would surpass in interest to us all that has been written upon him, for his original editors and commentators, not to mention his renderers into English, altogether failed to discriminate between the true text, as the author left it, and that which was assuredly engrafted upon it from time to time by unrecorded successors ; much as a Diary kept by a Warwickshire neighbour, who knew and valued the poet and his surroundings, would be cheap at the cost of all other *Shakespeareana*. The early *litterateur* contented himself for the most part with meagre and mechanical descriptions of political events. There were exceptions, as we know very well from such performances as Eginard's "Life of Charlemagne," the "Memoirs" of Commynes, and certain of the Biographies collected by Muratori. But even where the inner or private life of an epoch or an individual happened to find a painter, his colours were too often faint, and his handling niggard or feeble. Still, where premises are given to us, we have at any rate the privilege of drawing the conclusions. But in justice to the great authors of antiquity, and even those nearer in time to ourselves, it must be considered that a man wrote formerly *permissu superiorum*. If we do not possess much ancient literature of a strictly critical character, it is not perhaps that the critical faculty was wanting, but that the day of its development had not broken. Virgil was at liberty to exercise his pen as freely as he chose on bee-culture and the succession of crops, on the wars of Troy and the exploits of Æneas ; but he took care to clothe in apologue the social distempers of the age and his individual sufferings. What the spirit of an era demands or sanctions, its men learn to produce, and this seems, after a perusal of the "Stones of Venice," to be the germ of Mr. Ruskin's architectural teaching. Yet, after all, we have to go a step



farther in search of those who create the spirit, and have their sole reward, as a rule, at the hands of a generation which sanctifies their dust.

It should seem, then, that Archæology, as we understand and appreciate it, is a modern science, and that the pursuit and study of antiquities have been reserved for these elder ages. The philosophers and orators of classic times interested themselves rather in what had happened in or about their own period than in what had taken place a thousand years before. The Romans, indeed, ignored the elapsed centuries by setting up a new chronological principle of their own, an Italian Hegira, much as the Greeks long entertained without more particular inquiry the notion, that within their country lay the centre of the world, round which all the rest revolved. It was now here, now there, but always on Greek soil. Geographical science was scarcely beyond its alphabet.

Yet both Greeks and Romans had probably as much contemporary criticism among them as we have in proportion; there were plenty of persons, then as now, who thought themselves qualified to sit in judgment on every species of public transaction, from the policy of a great war to the meaning of an obscure word. Aulus Gellius lets us a little into the secret of what occupied the attention of literary folks at the Eternal City when he was there to make notes.

Nor can we say that their writers were wanting in those sentiments which lead men to hold up their ancestors as an example and precedent to succeeding epochs; but then among the Romans, at least, an appeal of this sort was not apt to go farther back than Romulus and Remus. They might proclaim the virtues of such as lived in the early days *urbis conditæ*, and trace the growth-up and development of arts and learning from the first commencement of the republic; but they did not care greatly to inform themselves of the state of civilisation and knowledge among those peoples who had been flourishing and powerful, while shepherd-boys were still piping to their flocks upon the Quirinal Hill. How poorly off we should be for historical types and examples if we had only to go to our great-grandfather Brutus, to Hengist and Horsa, Alfred the Cake-Burner and Norman William!

The school of retrospective inquiry, as we now see it, can hardly be allowed to ascend beyond the later half of the sixteenth century in point of date. It has become firmly rooted long since,

and has thrown out branches and feelers into every region of the globe, and into all departments of human science.

The mediæval rulers of Europe, and even those who more or less immediately followed them, seldom enough displaced the soil beneath their feet in search of those mineral riches more precious than gold and silver, than diamonds and rubies—those buried and forgotten remains, which have made history so modern a science, that even authorities within our own or our father's memory are laid on the shelf as obsolete and useless. We ask a good deal more from our teachers nowadays than a fertile fancy and a facile pen. They must bring with them their credentials as geologists, astronomers, chemists; they must have investigated monuments, barrows, weapons, tools, ornamental objects, coins, and household utensils of ancient races; they must not let a theory or a hobby run away with them: they must not hope to escape detection very long, if they do no worse than piece out a respectable body of facts with a modicum of fable to complete a link or establish a case.

Fairly educated and informed persons in the past, where they dealt with questions of a more or less abstruse character, were apt to betray an absence of perspicacity, which was more pardonable when modern science and archaeology were non-existent. In a Protestant pamphlet secretly printed in the time of Henry VIII. the writer ingenuously inquires: "When the Potter hath made the Pot, can the Pot turn again and make the Potter?" He, of course, points at transubstantiation and Romish idolatry; but he did not perceive that we have been doing nothing else since the world started—making the God Who made us.

The rarer and more intermittent the production of works of unusual excellence remained, the apter was the judgment on them to be indulgent. Where to age upon age only a single masterpiece was given, and where the circle of reviewers was narrower almost than we can conceive, a great author, even if he had faults, met with tender treatment and more than respectful homage; for literary constellations long partook of the nature of epochs in a people's history. The learned world was a small one, and it could not afford to be too dainty or too nice.

I do not know that I am far wrong in asserting that here in England the first, decided stimulus imparted to the spirit of antiquarian and historical research was the formation by Edward

Banister of Idworth in Hampshire of a rich and ample collection of marbles, pictures, and other valuable antiquities in the reign of Elizabeth; years upon years prior to the time of that Earl of Arundel, to whom what are still known as the Arundelian Marbles were sold. They were perhaps part of the Banister property; nor should it be concealed that Lord Arundel felt a very subdued interest in the matter, and had long permitted his acquisitions to lie neglected in a garden, when he allowed Evelyn to arrange their removal to Oxford.

Englishmen formerly, in common, I suppose, with the rest of the world, had their questioning humours and occasional fits of scepticism; but it was their habit, very far more than it is ours, to accept unexamined what was set before them by persons of weight and credit. Daring assertions went without confutation, simply because, as a rule, there was nobody to confute them; and credulity was always at hand to give the benefit of the doubt, in any cases where the marvellous or romantic chanced to be a conspicuous ingredient in a story.

The cases were quite exceptional in England and elsewhere even after the Revival of Learning in the sixteenth century, where any nicety of discrimination existed in judging the relative merits of authors, and Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder, one of our earliest critics, as well as satirists, stands alone in ridiculing and censuring such as—

“ Praised Sir Topas for a noble tale,  
And scorn'd the story which the Knight told.”

But the imperfect conversance of even educated and cultured men in our country with existing literary models, long after the days of Wyatt, is illustrated by the absurd pretension of Bishop Hall in 1597 to rank as the first writer of satire in England. Selecting two prominent samples, not only Shakespear in England, but Montaigne in France, waited long enough for permission from the critics to take their true places in general appreciation. Enough has been said of the former; but, as regards the great Frenchman, he was regarded by his contemporaries as primarily, if not almost exclusively, the man of action, the magistrate and soldier, and by the writers of the eighteenth century as an author, who dealt in interesting speculations and audacious paradoxes. We at this moment have no longer at least any warrant for being ignorant that he was as much a practical politician and patriot as he was

a scholar, a thinker, and a literary master. Let the world spare its tardy apology. It has been with him as with so many, many others. He retired from the world, not dissatisfied with its impression and treatment of him, for he strangely undervalued his intellectual fame and rank. The sound of his voice has been lost, and the echo of his footstep; yet do I not know more of him than of millions who have perished, body and soul, within my own time, and do I not hold more of him?—the part, which he could not take away, which he intentionally left behind him, to preserve his name, as he thought, some fifty years longer. Had he and Shakespear had the advantage of heralds to announce at their entrance on the scene their merits and their claims, they might ere now have been forgotten.

Our own earlier or old-fashioned critical literature was not critical at all in a high sense. Authors belaboured each other on paper with good English vigour and a good honest relish. The detection of a little crop of blunders in a man's book, instead of bespeaking for him a more or less temperate and impartial censure, secured the early march into print of some foul-phrased or coarsely-spiced tract, in which he got brimming measure of hard knocks. How infinitely preferable it would have been from the beginning, had reviewers contented themselves, in the absence of personal knowledge, with an outline of the author's plan and a reservation of their own views!

In ancient days people were satisfied with ephemeral disquisitions, with superficial, temporary *nugæ*. It was a school of stupid invective and furious detraction, which shews symptoms of dying out, which, if the judicial counsel of Pope had been followed, would be absolutely a thing of the past. But if a reviewer can be nothing better than a pupil of the old school, I am sorry for him.

The elder critics of our own and other countries, with much affectation of profundity and point, seldom went more than skin-deep into their author. Notwithstanding the *dit* of Macaulay, that criticism in this country was extinct in his time, there is at need or on occasion, more real, sound analysis, and illustrative acumen, now than there ever was; more substantial service has been conferred, in the way of making straight what was crooked, disentangling what was confused, elucidating what was dark, as regards the literature of all ages within the last century than was ever done before, since Aristotle taught the world to think.

Even in the eighteenth century the clumsiest fabrications not only passed undetected by the public, but found apologists among men who assumed to be scholars ; and at present the world, to make amends perhaps for having gaped too widely and having been heretofore too omnivorous, has fallen into the vice of putting down many standard beliefs and of discountenancing all professing discoverers. Formerly we pinned our faith to most things that we were told ; but a fit of coyness and mistrust has settled upon us. Our grandfathers accepted without question the forgeries of Ireland, which were the most transparent imposture, those of Chatterton, which even Walpole discredited and exposed, and those of I do not recollect whom, which passed for a time under noble auspices as English versions of the Poems of Camœns. To guard ourselves against a repetition of such folly we have crossed over to the other side of the platform ; and under the influence of this reaction it was that a literary committee was invited to sit upon the "Paston Letters," and that certain people set down the correspondence of Boswell with the Rev. Mr. Temple as a hoax and a fraud. It was a jump from the absurdest credulity to the absurdest scepticism. Much in the same way people began by believing all that they found in Jeffrey of Monmouth, and, when a doubt was cast on the veracity of that writer, threw away his book as waste paper. Now we have at least learned to take it for what it is worth. Poor Jeffrey had sinned no worse than many a better man before and since. He had padded a little matter-of-fact with a great deal of matter-of-fancy.

It became the case long before our time, that a man, who had new light to throw on a subject, employed his own vehicle, brought out his volume or his pamphlet, which was perhaps the first of a shelf of such ephemerides, each more incisive without being more convincing than its precursor, and it may still even now and then happen that an able person communicates to a journal or a review his ripe judgment on a publication of the day. But matters of this kind, so far as the press is concerned, have fallen almost completely into the hands of paragraph-writers *currente calamo* and cyclopædic loan-contractors. It is easier to exaggerate than to define, to copy than to think. The power of analysis is less common than the command of phraseology.

What has become of those Essays, which adorned the columns of the *Times* fifty or sixty years since : scholarly, ripe, lumincus,

temperate, delightful? What have we in their room? Abraham Hayward and Sydney Godolphin Osborne have died without issue. What have we to take the place even of the papers in the *Retro-spective Review*, naturally soberer, naturally and perhaps fitly less brilliant, but full of informing matter exempt from passion and personality? These are types of criticism, where the account by one man of another man's book is often more instructive and agreeable than the book itself.

Swift, in his "Tale of a Tub" (the *ovum* of "Sartor Resartus"), has not failed to introduce some caustic remarks on the craft and brotherhood of which I am speaking. "A true critic," says he, "hath one quality in common with a harlot and an alderman, never to change his title or his nature." But even Swift did not foresee the evolutionary process, by which criticism and authorship were made interchangeable, and by which, like Bacchus crowning himself on the ancient Greek coins, a critic (hardly a true one) might eulogize or appreciate his own work in friendly columns. He may have grasped the unquestionable fact, that to a large extent the interest of an author is in a topic only so far as it is capable of reflecting distinction on himself where he takes it up, while the interest of an ordinary reviewer centres rather in the writer than in the matter written. An indifferent performance by a friend presents the twofold advantage of serving as a foil, and of offering a peg, on which the critic may hang some of his own casual learning. A good book by a stranger or an enemy can expect only one of two fortunes—to be abused or ignored.

Had Swift lived nearer to our day, his estimate of criticism might have been yet more unfavourable. As it was, he offered certain remarks suggestive of his perusal of a small book called *De Charlatanariâ Eruditorum*. The younger Disraeli defined critics to be those who had failed in literature—an observation already made by Shelley. But the graver point is, that so many of them equally fail in the art which they have espoused as an alternative.

Swift took the liberty of presuming that the ass, who is fabled to have first introduced mankind to a knowledge of the properties of the vine by browsing on the tendrils with much apparent gusto, was in fact a critic. But were a critic no worse than that, it were well. Frequently when he works *incognito*, he does his best to damn your book in order to air his own knowledge, to gratify some

pique, or to assist a friend, who has a rival undertaking on the stocks or up his sleeve. Sometimes he notes a trifling oversight by way of shewing that he is acquainted with all that you are and one thing more. According to Apuleius the ancients possessed ointments capable of transforming a man into an owl or an ass, and then he had to eat rose-leaves in order to regain his original shape; but he does not tell us whether the reviewers of his time found it necessary to resort to these specifics. The druggist of ours does not keep them in stock.

No one has probably at any period expressed himself on the subject of contemporary criticism so unreservedly and so caustically as Dickens in some of his letters. He does not mince or qualify; and if he were now living, he would scarcely see reason to retract anything; and there is before me a letter from Mrs. Jameson to Mrs. Procter in a similar strain. A journalist too often proceeds a master in his vocation without having served his articles. He enters on his career as on something demanding no preparation, just as a retired comedian or military man becomes at sight an improvisatore in wine or coals. As Pope says:—

“ All fools have still an itching to deride,  
And fain would be upon the laughing side.  
If Mævius scribble in Apollo's spite,  
There are who judge still worse than he can write.”

Whatever one may do, one should beware of getting into a hornet's nest by excepting to the writings of some reviewer's pet, or of some one, who has the command of the press—even of him or of her, of whom there are Eulogies or Appreciations extant. Their friends may be sensible of their faults; but these are instantly forgotten, when an unlicensed third party assails them, and they become *ipso facto* brilliant and masterly. It is like stepping in between a man and his wife; they join in abusing you. The novelists on the press are not as other novelists are; they fib *ex cathedra—ore rotundo*; they resemble the street urchins, who, if you chastise them for robbing your garden, break your windows or your fence. Find fault with them, and your next book is born damned. Yet you may take comfort; for, if you are in the right and hold your peace, the world will come round to you, unless peradventure meanwhile *itur ad astra*.

I do not know whether the existing system will gradually

work its own cure. Lay-folks begin to read between the lines of a review or of a statement in a paper; I hear, wherever I go, one sentiment—growing incredulity touching newspaper intelligence—and something more. A writer who has been attacked on insufficient grounds by a periodical is met by his non-literary acquaintance, not with sympathy, as formerly, but with a smile and a quiet remark, that you do not seem to be on friendly terms with this or that Editor. It is a question, not of merit or the want of it, but of good fellowship. But the artificial estimation of literary work, where it leans to the favourable side, carries its own drawbacks and punishment. The machinery, which lifts a gentleman into a false station and maintains him there for a season, is not constructed of very durable material. One's *confrères* cannot be expected to prop one up for ever. I have known one lucky fellow or so (as it was thought), who had not long to live before he met with an unkind awakening and found himself in the plight of the tinker in the interlude, who was no duke after all, but a mender of pots and pans. *Troja fuit, fuit—*

It may be in the long run preferable to creep up than to be hoisted up, for, unless one holds one's ground, the fall is the severer. But then we all hanker after some kind of praise, and we even like it to come before we have passed out of hearing. The ready-money principle has its recommendations, no doubt; but for cash there must ever be discount. When one takes in one's hand a gallery of distinguished modern authors in a publisher's illustrated advertisement, one asks oneself the questions: "To how much does the aggregate product of all these celebrities amount?" "What have they collectively added to knowledge and thought?" "What proportion do their loans bear to their gifts?"

There is even a sort of men, once more, who aim at the attainment of glory at second-hand by resuscitating defunct reputations, no matter how slender the claim of their candidates may be. One gentleman alone of my time loaded our shelves with a very Alps of re-awakened worthies, but they are already as dead as they were before; it was a vain attempt to reanimate corpses; and then the Rev. George Crabbe has just now found an Editor and a Biographer more indulgent to him than the authors of the "Rejected Addresses." Each successive age seems to be circumscribed by its own intellectual meridian, as one standing on Primrose Hill cannot see St. Peter's at Rome or the coast of Australasia. Apart



from a literary performance itself, there is the optical medium, the consonant atmosphere; and even the greatest human names, if they are to be charmed into a new and enduring life, demand something more than the good offices of an interpreter—of a corps of them.

One periodically stumbles on gushing enthusiasts, who individually, or as members of a learned association, profess a quite cataractic zeal for some subject or some author. There is an instinctive pleasure in feeling that a neglected topic or individual is at length to receive long-deferred homage at the hands of disinterested admirers, and one awaits with curiosity, even with solicitude, the development of the heroic undertaking. What is the upshot? One discovers that a gentleman or a body of gentlemen have chosen a departed worthy—even such an one as him of Stratford-on-Avon—or a more unworked line of study as a fulcrum for advertising their own erudition and personality; and if I or any one else venture to announce that we have penned something on the same topic in the same spirit long ago, or even that we have preoccupied much of the ground, without a syllable of acknowledgment from anybody, we run the risk of being decried as disagreeable and conceited fellows.

Not one but several schemes, interestingly variant, have been carried out of recent years by my eminent contemporaries for the benefit of those who might desire to become book-buyers, and who lacked either the inclination or the leisure to choose for themselves. By these means one found oneself the owner of a library at one bound; one leapt into the saddle in full armour. There were those who ministered to your needs by supplying you with the books themselves, the best—not in your opinion, for you were not supposed to have any, but in theirs—and others, who read and even who picked on your behalf, and made into a parcel the nett product of their labour—the best of the best according to them, again—elegant volumes in elegant bindings in elegant cases for a mere bagatelle, payable almost at your own pleasure. These marvellous boons, these absolute literary sugar-plums, it is strange and sad to relate, were not accepted with the greedy avidity which their promoters anticipated; and modest as the tariff was at which they might be had from the workshop, yet modester in booksellers' lists anon became their valuation. The public does not deserve to have such noble and splendid benefactors as — or —

or ——. O noblemen and gentlemen, you were born too early. The world has to grow worthy of you.

Then if, as some appear to think, books are growing into disfavour, and we are all to be moulded and governed by the press, consider to what an universal anæmia we should surely descend, if generation after generation of us were to be brought up on such mental spoon-meat, on newspaper pap and whipped froth. So far as real information goes, the press is hardly of that value, which is usually claimed for it—by itself; too much of the matter supplied has been executed at sight or second-hand, on the impulse of the moment or under some temporary bias. Take a notorious case. Russell's "Indian Diary" conclusively establishes that the First Indian Mutiny was attributable partly to official incompetence and partly to journalistic misrepresentations. Perhaps we shall not hear of a second till it has broken out, and it will be worse than the first. What, if we were to start Paperless, Magazineless to-morrow!

"O fortunatos nimium! sua si bona nôrint."

It is one of those not few things, in which French ingenuity and *sang-froid* have outstripped us, to form and distribute gratis albums of a sumptuous description dedicated to the achievements of a commercial house, with the portraits and autographs of its clients. Let some of our own good folks in too modest Britain see whether they cannot extend their fame by taking as a model the "Album Mariâne." True enough, it is a trade circular; but the methods of my worshipful countrymen and countrywomen are not dissimilar, merely less advanced, less concentric, not in quite so striking a focus. That is all.

*Audi alteram partem.* There is not much to be pleaded for it; but there is something. In the first place one benefit, which society and literature derive from criticism of the higher class or even of a fair character, is the sensible presence of a jurisdiction, which is apt to act as a curb and a balance. The existence of a critical tribunal must be a healthy force in some respects or directions, notwithstanding its inherent proneness to personal and party feeling. Secondly, it might be the source of general advantage, if reviewers should constitute themselves, at all events, in the case of certain books and the necessary scholarship presumed, a co-operative agency in the improvement of texts and the extension of knowledge.

## XXIII

### SOME LATE AND LIVING AUTHORS

"Tempus edax *Auctorum*."

"Soles occidere et redire possunt.—CATULLUS.

"De mon temps, je suis trompé, si les pires escrits ne sont ceux qui ont gagné le dessus du vent populaire."—MONTAIGNE.

"Il n' point de plus courte vie que celle d'un mauvais livre."—VAUGELAS.

"Vincenzo da Filicaja, a native of Florence, who was born in 1642 and died in 1707, was a poet whom the universal esteem of his contemporaries, and the echoes of their admiration, during the first half century that succeeded his death, raised to such distinguished reputation, that he has become famous throughout Europe, and is idolized in his own country as an absolute prodigy of genius."—*Retrospective Review*, 1824, x. 314.

"In literature, as in the playthings of schoolboys and the fribbery of women, there are the ins and outs of fashion."—SOUTHEY.

SOUTHEY has a remark in one of his letters upon temporary and permanent reputation, which, if not of striking novelty, is at all events excellently put, and ought to have its consoling influence on those authors whose works are not cried up "in the top of the compass," till the vital pulse has done throbbing at booksellers' commissions and critical decrees.

What Southey says we all know well enough to be a truism—that the very elements of popularity are, as a rule, fatal to its endurance, that the characteristics, which a man's own age thinks fit to stamp as beauties, the next calls by a different name. Southey, without being aware of it, most conspicuously illustrated the maxim in his own person. Where are the poems by Mrs. Opie? where is Amos Cottle's *Guinea Epic*, published in the dog-days? where are the long hundred of novels by Mrs. Trollope, and all the lucubrations which were considered in some circles the gems of the annuals half a century or so ago? Is it the world that has altered its mind, and does the fate of so many so much commended and admired productions foreshadow that of similarly specious

ephemerides accumulating day by day and arousing our jealousy almost to jaundice point by the reception accorded to them?

Speaking of the poems of the Rev. John Pomfret a leading bibliographical guide remarks: "During the eighteenth century no other volume of poems was so often reprinted, or held in such popular estimation." In the "Memoirs of Thomas Holcroft" the dramatist, there is the following: "'Anna St. Ives,' a novel in 7 volumes, appeared in 1792. It was much read at the time, and excited considerable attention, both from the force with which it is written, and from the singularity of the characters and sentiments," and we find Charles Lloyd, whom his friend Lamb guilelessly described (and doubtless regarded) as "one of the first geniuses of our age," in 1795 recommending it to his brother Robert.

What strikes one here is the complete death which has befallen this highly lauded and widely read publication. It probably ceased to be much asked for after '93. It was as transient as a *vaudeville*, or as Moore's "Loves of the Angels," of which the author lets us know that 6000 copies were sold in the first month, and which is at present deader than a stone, and has never since been reprinted. The "singularity of the characters and sentiments" must have strangled it; for how can we tell, not having seen the work (and who has?), that "singularity" was not at the time a charitable euphemism, an indulgent paraphrase? Besides, Holcroft's books appeared more than a century since, and are not the works of fiction of men far more recent and contemporary already shelved? Do the circulating libraries lend out so freely the novels of James Payn, a man with many friends, "a sunny nature," as somebody said? But to return for a moment to Moore. Is it possible, let me ask, that the virtuous and orthodox British public discovered that the *prima stamina* of the "Loves of the Angels" were to be traced to the "Book of Enoch," and declined to have anything more to do with the work? Moore was extremely successful at one time in satisfying the booksellers, and was hand and glove with the great. For "Lalla Rookh" a firm gave him £3000; as Byron waggishly puts it:—

"Lalla Rookh,  
A naughty book  
By Tommy Moore  
Who's written four"—

The "Loves of the Angels" was one of this licentious quadrilateral. Well outside it were the "Irish Melodies": graceful, sonorous, and effervescent, agreeable reading for the boudoir, and not ill-suited to an accompaniment on the piano or the harp, yet wanting in the patriotic fire calculated to stir the heart of a people, and we have to remember with gratitude the "Twopenny Post-Bag," a courageous venture for its day.

The "Melodies" are melodious, but they are not Pindaric—are they not a little sing-song, forsooth, like Poe's "Raven"? Nor can the unworthy Saxon accept all the exuberant patriotism of the author, and he must even be indulged if he views with scepticism the phantasmagoria about the ancient splendour of Ireland under its native princes—

"When Malachi wore the collar of gold,  
Which he won from her proud invader."

That a man should write books seven-volume strong, that those books should have utterly vanished from the sight of the world, should be more unusual than Caxtons, and that the author should scarcely be recollected, while children of his yet live, by anything but one play and one anecdote, shews, if nothing else does, that Time the Avenger may give us what odds he chooses, and beat us still by a very long head! There was Hannah More's "Coelebs," which, as Lamb says in a letter of 1809 to Coleridge, saw eight editions in as many weeks—"one of the very poorest sort of common novels, with the drawback of dull religion in it." It has faded from view. There was Hayley, whose "Triumphs of Temper" saw edition upon edition as surely as the years followed one another, just in the same manner as Mr. Tupper's "Philosophy" once did; he is now less read and more unreadable than if he had lived a thousand years ago. He, and many and many like him, discounted at an usurious rate their property of permanence. Of all those persons who make up the bulk and volume of Johnson's "Lives" or even the "English Cyclopædia," how large a proportion has, long before this time, suffered a metamorphosis more complete than any which Ovid sings! How small a compass, according to the existing standard of taste, would the poetical literature of the eighteenth century occupy? Perhaps it may happen that, by and by, a writer will rise up and pass a like judgment on the male and female ruffs (the expression is Will

Waterproof's) of our day! It was about Johnson's time that a volume appeared, giving an account of 500 celebrated authors. This was in 1788. I grope for them in vain. In turning over a volume of "New Elegant Extracts" from Chaucer nearly to our own time there grows up in the mind a twofold regret: that much was not written in prose, and that much was not left unwritten; and yet these are the choice flowers of British poetry—the carefully selected Heliconian travail of 500 years. In how narrow a compass might all that is permanently valuable be housed! How many of our old idols we shall one day be found throwing down, if it is only to make room for some which we did not at first recognize! And so it is with all these matters. The mountainous accumulation of European literature has to pass through the sieve, and the slender residue might be churned a second time, if we desired only the pure essence. A consolation seems to be, that the whole illustrates the flux and reflux of human thought, and serves to place in bolder relief the relatively few masterpieces in letters and art. There might be an edifying catalogue of literary personages in two alphabets: the first an exhaustive list of those who have produced books during the last fifty years; the second, a briefer one, of such as are generally recollected to-day.

There are writers among us now whose reputation froths and bubbles on the surface of literature like that of Dumas *père*, and whose names will sink into oblivion when they are dead—if indeed they are not so unfortunate as to live long enough to be forgotten before, as it happened the other day with the author of the "Imaginary Conversations." Nobody can surely pretend that Mr. Landor did not survive his fame as he survived his friends. He was *ultimus Romanorum*, the last of the literary generation which fought duels and wrote Latin verse. The prevailing taste of the day for what are styled library editions is reflected in the booksellers' windows and lists, where, jostled and elbowed by a literary compost suitable for half-educated dilettanti, one distinguishes only here and there an entry or an article of a different tenor and endurance.

The proverb instructs us that "he hath not lived, who liveth not after he is dead," and accordingly it is usual to find authors, as they see themselves drawing nigh to the "narrow house," making their fame fast to some *magnum opus*, some splendid creation of the brain, as to an anchorage. Southey complains somewhere

that his "History of Brazil" did not bring him in much more than the Preface he supplied to a reprint of the "Morte d'Arthur"; but then it was the rock on which his name was built, the water-tight bark, in which his renown would sail as securely down the stream of time as an Indian's canoe stems Canadian torrents. Unless I am very much mistaken, Southey was wise when he calculated his future station in reckoning for nothing his contributions to the *Quarterly*, for which his excellent friend Murray so handsomely paid him; but I am afraid that he formed in his own mind a somewhat fallacious estimate of his future rank among the verse-writers of Great Britain. I think I am right when I say that "Madoc," "Thalaba," "Kehama," and the rest of his poems, have long abdicated the place in modern English literature which their author anticipated that they would and even *must* hold for ever. Nor is it by any means clear to me, that a history of Brazil, written on modern lines, will not consign Southey's volumes to the same shelf as his metrical lucubrations. They were all alike *time-work*.

His rapidity of composition has retaliated 'on him in the long run. He tells us that he once wrote twelve hundred verses in a single week, but that, later on, he was not equal to such a feat; and in a letter to a friend in 1801 he speaks of the facility with which he can earn £100 by making *rhymes*. Rhymes indeed! It has been said that easy writing is hard reading. It is curious to observe the difference between a writer like Hobbes and a writer like Southey; it is the difference between the abstract and the concrete. While the author of "Leviathan" occupied himself in working out a theory or analysing an argument, the author of "The Doctor" could write 3650 pages of letterpress by the clock. It is one thing to build a house with bricks, and another to be able to tell how a brick is made.

On the title-pages of some of the old editions of his collected works, Chaucer is designated the Ancient and Learned Poet; it was the point of view not only of his contemporaries, but of succeeding generations, but to us he does not seem much more out of date than the author of "The Doctor," and on his erudition we have not been taught to lay so much stress as on his higher qualifications. He passed for a scholar perhaps among his circle, as Southey passed for a poet. I apprehend that he is at present remembered rather as a poet and his modern successor rather as

a scholar—of a sort. Yet by an almost amusing obliquity of understanding the latter, in comparing himself with Scott, spoke of him as the mere favourite of the day, and of his own labours as destined to grow in national estimation—to delight remote ages. Such a fortune is probably reserved for neither. But so it is that in each consecutive era there have been minor writers who deemed themselves, and were proclaimed by their backers, as good as not a few who stood at their side, but who have succeeded in standing likewise at ours. In some cases it is an injustice to an author to be seen and judged through contemporary eyes; it is an injustice to posterity in others. We therefore have to hold periodical Courts of Cassation or of Review, and the black ball is more in request than the white.

Southey's name and his writings, nevertheless, will live for a very long time to come for several reasons. He is (to say nothing more) the Model Man of Letters of the last century, and there is that delightful correspondence of his, second only to Lamb's, and on the whole less unequal. Elsewhere I venture a remark on the influential force of personal character in preserving a reputation from oblivion; and this, so far as the man is concerned, is as true of Southey as it is in other ways of Wordsworth and Thackeray.

There is another reputation, that of the author of the "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," which may be said to stand on its own ground, unapproached and unshaken, like a relic of the brick architecture of that great people. The pages of Gibbon present blemishes and errors, which an advanced boy at a public school might be able to point out and to rectify. His opinions were heterodox. His style has become obsolete. But, like Hume, he was no bookmaker. He did not reckon how many folios he could cover in an hour. He was a scholar and a gentleman. His publisher came to him, with his hat in one hand and a draft in the other. It was not that he was a rich man in the ordinary sense; but he had wherewithal to safeguard his freedom from the most degrading of all tyranny—that of the bookseller. His volumes are a piece of literature, not because they have been revised by Milman (which tells against them), but because their author and they are indissolubly associated in our minds with a certain train of circumstances, which are more powerfully interesting to the world than the mere historical narrative itself. Other



books may perish in spite of their merits ; this will live in spite of its faults.

Authors are not, perhaps, the best judges of their own pretensions and weight in the scale, and certainly they have not been very happy, as a rule, in selecting the particular work by which they would choose to stand. But the latter circumstance may be owing to the general incredulity of the literary profession as to the fact that few of them are remembered by more than one thing of their doing.

Smollett, no doubt, thought that "Peregrine Pickle" and "Roderick Random" were "not so bad," but that the "History of England" was his masterpiece and the keystone. The public at present thinks not, however, and Mr. Mudie has no inquiries after Hume's Continuator. It is as much as the booksellers care to do to reprint the work from the old plates once in a dozen years for the benefit of admirable gentlemen forming what are by courtesy denominated libraries.

With the inimitable comic humour of the late George Cruikshank a majority of us are at accord ; but that artist conceived that his true excellence and strength lay elsewhere—in serious history ; and the younger Matthews, who had been a pupil of Nash, looked back regretfully at his abandoned profession of an architect. How strange are the illusions of genius ! I know that Tennyson did not propose to live by his humorous efforts, and I hope that the late Mr. Frederick Locker did not so by his verses to his grandmamma ! What Elton says of Ausonius may be thought equally true of Locker. He must be considered as a verse-maker rather than as a poet. His genius was minute and trifling, and he has a flimsy and affected taste. He is a writer of *bon-bons* for the fashionable *salon*. Even the catalogues of the respective libraries left by him and Henry Huth afford a fair index to the difference between the two men—a comparison so far advantageous to Locker, that both had a share of the virtuoso. But if one were to place side by side the collection of the author of "London Lyrics" and that of a scholar or a man of letters, the contrast would be immeasurably more telling.

Thackeray, as a draughtsman, shewed what a man of genius can do who possesses the taste and judgment of an amateur and the experience of an advanced pupil, without any real aptitude for the vocation of an artist, or appreciable genius for depicting

his notions of people and things with any implement other than his pen. Yet he laid, no doubt, great stress on his graphic capabilities; and his friends, or at least his publishers, commit the singular absurdity of reproducing these grotesques in the latest impressions of his works. The world had Cruikshank, Doyle, Leech, and Hablot Browne; and Thackeray's essays, in a field not his own, and apparently modelled on the rather stiff and mechanical style of Doyle, might have well remained *incognito*,—they would have become the gems of his friends' portfolios, or, as some of them did, of his housekeeper's, or as some of Aubrey Beardsley's graver miscarriages do, it is understood, of his late publisher's. But upon me they produce a disagreeable impression, and even make me throw away the volume in which they occur, as do the prospectuses posted to me by certain publishing houses with the latest wonderful wonders of their literary prodigies proclaimed by sound of trumpet in broadside type with portraits of the gifted beings. Thackeray was a man of prolific literary faculty and a cynical humorist; but the plain truth is that his writings, from his narrow culture and observation, are scarcely less warped than his artistic work. In his more playful vein—in his Ballads and his Imitations of others—he is happiest. The novelist, who portrays certain of his characters at second-hand or by guess-work, resembles the makers of old maps where fancy served them in delineating unknown regions. Scenes in high life delineated by those, who in former days had no access to it, cannot be expected to be faithful or authoritative, while such from the pens of those within the pale are apt, if they are undertaken, to be deficient in literary workmanship; and even the latitude, which may be excused on the stage in the representation of persons of rank, is not permissible in the realistic story or sketch, where too great a violence to truth offends and estranges.

Gray used to devour with avidity the romances of the Duc de Rochefoucauld and the Duc de Nemours. The generation which went before had run mad upon Calprenede, Mlle. de Scudery, and Honoré Durfé, and does not the old York printer, Thomas Gent, tell us how his dear niece, Anne Standish, had "Cassandra" by heart? It was the same with Johnson and his contemporaries. Hazlitt, who died in 1830, by no means an old man, was an enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. Inchbald and Mrs. Barbauld—the two *bald* women. Both he and Lamb speak eulogistically of

"Nature and Art" by the first, and few nowadays know whether it was a novel or an illustrated magazine.

Miss Burney's "Evelina" was once in everybody's mouth. It is now where "Dennis Donne," "Eleanor's Victory," *et hoc genus omne*, will be before they are half so old. The public taste is more ephemeral than the most ephemeral publication it patronises, and then abandons; for almost the same may be said of Hook and Jerrold. Do the booksellers find "Gilbert Gurney" and "Sayings and Doings" worth reprinting? Jerrold seems to have died but yesterday, and his works are as little asked for at the libraries as "Vathek" and the "Castle of Otranto." Does the book trade experience as eager a call for the writings of Fenimore Cooper and Anthony Trollope? Nay, sadder still, Sydney Smith, as a humorist superior to Lamb, and as a man even more so, is barely recollected.

Much of the romantic and sentimental extravagance on which our ancestors complacently and contentedly browsed was imported from Germany, where, side by side with some of the best writers and thinkers of that country during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a succession of fluent scribblers flooded the market with popular and saleable garbage. The Germans enjoy the reputation of being an excessively learned and imaginative people; but they have given to the world fully their fair share of perishable commonplace.

People, by which we intend people in Mr. Mudie's or Mr. Hookham's sense, judge of the antiquity of books and of the antiquity, say of furniture, rather differently. A book which is as old as our dining-table is an old book. Chaucer is but ancient. For all practical purposes, Miss Burney's novels are as out of date as the "Faëry Queen," and of the two I do not know whether Spenser is not the less neglected!

There may be some living who recollect well when Mr. Plumer Ward was ranked with Dickens, and Bulwer, and Scott. I have heard the sum mentioned, which Mr. Colburn gave him for "Tremaine"; it was about eight times as much as "Vanity Fair" brought to Michael Angelo Titmarsh.

O happy age! satisfied with its own offspring, with its particular pets, with what Thoreau calls its tit-men! Once upon a time it was the Moores and the Campbells, the Lockharts and the Aytouns, the Inchbalds and the Barbaulds, and how many more?

—and have we reason to be prouder or gladder? The late Mr. Pater can hold all the darlings of the press in the hollow of his hand, and he had no *chaperon*, nor had Mr. Jefferies or Mr. Meredith. Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson had a few too many. His friends have well-nigh undone him. They have made more of him than perhaps he either foresaw or desired. His self-evident solecism, that Taste is the feminine of Genius, they advertised as a prodigy of critical acumen.

Sir Walter Scott's obligations to the anonymous appearance of "Waverley" have not been generally appreciated, I take it. The booksellers would have had a very different story to tell if the Waverley Novels had only been Scott's Novels. Never was such a case known before (or since) of books standing by each other. Why, if we admire "Ivanhoe," which is natural, we must admire "Redgauntlet," or at least buy it, for that seems to say "I, too, am a Waverley Novel!" "The Heart of Midlothian" is not perfect without "The Black Dwarf" for the same reason; and "Quentin Durward" pairs off with "Castle Dangerous." It is not so with most authors. Because one buys "Tristram Shandy," one need not buy the "Sentimental Journey," which is quite another matter.

It is a fiction to assert that each Novel is sold separately, and is complete in itself. It is no such thing. They are a serried phalanx, locking their shields together, clan-like. If you have one, you must have all, or you break a set. You might as well buy an odd lot of the "Percy Anecdotes," or Volume XIX. of the "Encyclopædia Britannica." Any one who desires to possess the Waverley Novels must order his bookseller to send the complete set to him with the backs lettered. He must not pick and choose. Sir Walter's mistake, after all, was that he ever wrote anything but novels—Waverley Novels. If he had been wise, he would have ended as he began, and then every gentleman's bookcase would have had to groan under something like an hundredweight of Scott's prose. As it is, we get out of buying "Marmion" and the "Lady of the Lake," and I know not how much more besides, if we like, and still do not spoil our series. The question arises, Why have we not the Pickwick Novels and the Knebworth Novels?

It may be said, however, that the Waverley Novels, or the best of them, are almost the only things of the sort that are worth

## SOME LATE AND LIVING AUTHORS

reading. They are always fresh, because nature is always so. They are free from the twaddle and bombast which usually taint this class of writing. They carry us back far enough, but not too far. They are old enough, but not too old. I suppose that they cannot help being too Scottish; even the author of the "Unspeakable Scot" may allow them points. In Scott's verses there is a masculine vigour, a warmth, and a swing, which used to commend them to me in days gone by.

"Ivanhoe," "The Talisman," and one or two more, with what a masterly hand they are done, not repelling us by their remoteness, scarcely letting us suspect, till we have laid the volume down, and can think about it more at leisure, that we have been following our romancist into what are, popularly speaking, prehistoric times. As to Scott's Notes it is different. I have not looked at them these thirty years or more. But he was an indifferent antiquary, and his archæological elucidations are poor stuff.

It is a ticklish matter for an author to cast his story too far back in antiquity. The only tale which belongs to the classical age, and which is not insipid or ridiculous, is "The Last Days of Pompeii," albeit it is as a matter of fact not much more to be trusted than the same author's "Pelham" in a different way. Some one claimed for Bulwer the credit of having been the first (in his "Richelieu") to say that the Pen had conquered the Sword. But did not Leigh Hunt forestal him?

Other books there are that have been wrought of late days, which the world has a mind and a will to cherish. It will always keep "Adam Bede" with it, and the weaver of Raveloe. It will not part with "Eugene Aram," nor with "Paul Clifford." "David Copperfield" and Colonel Newcome will not be forgotten, or fall out of their places. Tom Jones and My Uncle Toby will continue to the end to fill their old corners in our libraries and in our recollections.

Of Dickens it may be said that for thorough permanence, for lasting rank as an English classic, he not only dealt too largely, as Benjamin Jonson had done long before, in local colouring and temporary sentiment, but even caricatured what was already little short of that. The same cause, which will probably prove fatal to Cruikshank as an artist, may prove fatal to the other as a writer. Matter, which is entertaining in conversation, in a newspaper, nay, in a serial, is apt to be deficient in fibre and catholicity.

Dickens was a contemporary author, and if his types are grotesques, the illustrations to the text are too often still more so. The truth always suffices; it is bad enough, good enough; serious enough, comical enough. Exaggeration palls and kills. Already of those who ask for Dickens a substantial quota want the plates, and are satisfied with something short of earliest proofs, or buy sixpenny selections for the entertainment of their children.

The author of the "Earthly Paradise," "Love is Enough," and many a romantic story of the older time, impressed one with a feeling of the unreality of his pretensions as a poet. A poet he was in the sense of robust executive power; but you could not help seeing in the background the prosperous man of business and the socialist; and if you succeeded in summing up this rather perplexing and distasteful triunity, it was to conclude that the late Mr. Morris, was, like his predecessor Michael Angelo, practical above all things, and also resembled him in the versatility of his acquirements, employing his pen in the intervals of leisure in the service of the Muses and (which the greater Italian could not have done) in mounting the tribune to advocate an equal division of property—that is, of all save his own.

As for Fielding and that school, I have a fancy for reading them in the old editions, as Lamb had for Sir Thomas Browne in folio, though, lackaday! what would he have said to the Kelmscott Chaucer? The stiff crackling paper, the elderly-faced type, the short paragraphs, and the well-thumbed old calf bindings, seem proper to the subject and to the author, if not part of them both. The contrast is more intelligible, because, as you read, you are incessantly reminded of the period, to which the author belonged, by the whole force and temperature of the printed medium. In a modern edition of an old writer there is apt, unless he is a Shakespear or a Chaucer, who are never old, to be a lack of concord. "Tom Jones" has been published in one foolscap book at a couple of shillings. I would rather not see it. It is in my eyes a desecration. It is enough to imagine the thin damp paper, the closely-packed page, the blurred cramped printing, the cropped edges, and the act-drop cover! I cannot think this is my Parson Adams. My "Tom Jones" is too good to be reprinted at a steam-press, and sold at railway-stations. Of all books Gilbert White's "History of Selborne" was the one which should have been left unviolated by the pagan republisher. It is essentially a personal work

appurtenant to an individual and an epoch, and should have been protected from editorial sacrilege.

Day, I venture to say, had no idea that his "Sandford and Merton" would never die. If he had intended it to be immortal, it would not have been! A book of a similar stamp, only not so enduring, I should fancy, by one-half, has been produced in our own time. "Tom Brown's School-days" will live to be old, because its matter and manner are not temporary. But why did Mr. Hughes insist on following it up by "Tom Brown at Oxford"? It reminds one of the evanescent imitations of the "Arabian Nights" and the Second and Third Parts of the "Pilgrim's Progress." How quite as happy and quite as rich the world would have been if Robinson Crusoe had not favoured it with his after-thoughts; but it laid itself at the feet of the triumphant author. How your literary idol knows how to twist you round his little finger! Book-buyers were amply satisfied; but the option was not theirs. Why should Tennyson have committed such a solecism as to spoil the "May Queen" by two last appearances, and "Locksley Hall" by a string of dull commonplaces, worthy of Tupper or Satan Montgomery? The author of "Sing a Song of Sixpence," or his injudicious editor, fell into a similar error. Because we have a "Dance of Death," must we have a "Dance of Life"? There is the delightful sketch of Horace by Sir Theodore Martin, but alas! it is spoiled by his attempt to render the original poems into English. The late Richard Jefferies went outside the domain, where he was so thoroughly at home, to vex us with weak novels and political rant. Another instance occurs to me, which is more regrettable than surprising, that of Grant Allen: by feeling and culture a naturalist, by necessity a manufacturer of excruciating romances. O how the paper-mills fatten on us! O for an age of Single Book Authors! One Man One Book. Would I could be of them!

I should be grateful to anybody who could explain satisfactorily the enthusiastic reception of such books as Lockhart's "Ancient Spanish Ballads" and Aytoun's "Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers." They can only be popular where a strange ignorance prevails of what they ought to have been. There are no two works which I have ever taken up with a more sanguine expectation of being entertained, and thrown down again with a keener sense of disappointment. Lockhart was an amiable man, and son-in-law to

Scott ; but he was not qualified for the task which he undertook. Neither he, nor Aytoun was a poet ; but the latter succeeded tolerably well, at all events, in producing correct versification. Lockhart's production seems to me totally to fail in conveying the spirit and grand simplicity of his originals ; the metre is faulty ; and the diction, where it is not feeble, is inappropriate. I turn from it to Percy's imitations of our own old minstrelsy, which awakened the ire of Ritson, and begin to think that, after all, they have a certain smack of Tyrtæus. There were men of the last generation, who were not poets at all in the sense in which Tennyson or Swinburne is a poet, yet who had an ear for rhythm. What would have become of Scott's "Marmion" or of Campbell's "Hohenlinden" if the writers had been as negligent of metrical laws as Lockhart, and as destitute of the true inspiration as Aytoun ?

But when we talk of Scottish poets and poetry, what do we mean ? All that has been ever written of any permanent and considerable worth, would go into a single volume. The Scots celebrate their Burns in dinners and toasts, but they do not read him ; they will sell the *editio princeps*, if they have it, to the highest American bidder. Sir Walter wrote some fine energetic smoothly running verse—no poetry. The noblest productions of the Northern Muse are perhaps a few of the pieces by authors of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries ; and there are a few capital songs, the melodies of which, by the way, struck Dean Ramsay as best calculated to preserve them.

Jack Hinton and Tom Burke are floating down with the tide, and Davenport Dunn, "The Man of our Day," will be ready to follow at the next flow, taking with him, perhaps, "Luttrell of Arran," who may offer his arm to Aurora Floyd and Lady Audley. They have enjoyed the full sunshine of public favour ; they have taken out all their fame in hard cash ; and now they have nothing more to look for. But in the case of this author it does not so greatly signify : for he has the art of perpetuating his types ; his characters are all "utility" people :—

"And many a Jack of Dover hast thou sold,  
That has been twice hot and twice cold."

The "Tower of London" and "Old St. Paul's" are pretty taking things, which many of us read with delight in our youth.



and might not venture to take up again for fear of the consequences; but then Ainsworth should not have given us "Whitefriars" and the "Constable de Bourbon." He set about the last, it appears, at the suggestion of a friend. This must have been a friend's malice! Alsatia was delicate ground to tread upon, when a master had pre-occupied it, and made it his own; and "Whitefriars" follows lamely in the trail of the "Fortunes of Nigel," as Mr. Caine's "Christian" does in that of his "Manxman." Johnson himself sounds the keynote of this part of my argument in the concluding paragraph of his account of David Mallet. But what a bombshell among the authors and booksellers would be a volume by an impartial and courageous and withal authoritative pen on the entire *corpus* of our writers in verse and prose! Would not such an undertaking tear to shreds many and many a fair reputation?

A serviceable and edifying enterprise, if it were done in such a manner as to command acceptance, would be a Register of Books which are *de facto* such, as distinguished from those, which suggest water poured out of one saucepan into another. It is Montaigne, who tells us that he, who takes his material from others, is not a maker, but a borrower, of books. Most of us have little enough to say worth hearing or reading, and even that slender minority is not long in growing monotonous.

The processes of ingress and egress continue with a rapidity proportionate to the constant and unfailing advent of newcomers. The air is perpetually resonant with the praises of the latest favourite. Now it is this, now that, writer, who is having a good time, who is the talk of the town, the press, and the drawing-rooms. One stands by and holds one's peace. One feels sure that common sense will have its turn, that lucubrations calculated for the meridian of the mess-room, the public house, the kitchen, or the kitchen-fire, will not always be cried up as national treasures, that coxcombical, daintily upholstered frippery in prose or verse will not for ever pass current as a book, and that such as put on the market nauseous compounds of silliness, indecency, and blasphemy, will regain their true level after a passing homage at the hands of readers more foolish than themselves.

Even the healthier popular authors of the day or the season suffer, like the rose crushed by its gatherer from very excess, of

affection, by too impulsive and superficial applause. The reception and standing accorded to many who are yet among us cannot endure very long, because they are due, not to deliberate conviction, but to unwholesome agencies and methods, which favour precocious ripeness and premature decay.

## XXIV

### NOT UNCOMMON PEOPLE

"οἱ πλεῖστοι κακοί."—BIAS OF PRIENE.

"Ilachrymabiles ignotique longâ nocte urgentur."—HOR.

EVERYBODY must have known many, whose sole recommendation was that they were *not* common people, and others, again, whose sole defect might be said to be that they were. I personally understand as coming within the category individuals with trite, mechanical notions, and low-bred ways of judging, such as you may find among common-council men, schoolmasters, beadles, shopkeepers, and Government understrappers. A person may be as ignorant as a member of Convocation, and yet he may make a fair figure in society, nay, he may not impossibly be a gentleman. So far as mere ignorance is concerned, until it is classed among the Cardinal Vices, or is treated as an Eighth Deadly Sin, it will continue to be a prevailing characteristic of this and every other nation. There are two sections in the community always, consciously or otherwise, doing their best to impede the advance and diffusion of true knowledge: the Learners who will not learn, and the Teachers who cannot teach. Alas! is it not so, that when a man, who has unusually lofty aspirations, has absorbed all that schools and universities can afford or communicate, he has to start on a new career, one of self-instruction; and he quickly discovers that his life's work is before him, and that he has carried away from his teachers barely more than the A B C, like a fellow who begins the world with fourpence halfpenny.

There was K., with the heart of a gentleman, who could point to belted ancestors, and the look of a haberdasher: with feelings nearly too good for a lord: and the pronunciation of a mechanic. The soul, like Achitophel's, misfitted the body. There was unceasing bad accord between the mind and its grosser tenement. His appearance did not satisfy the conventional standard of gentility; and then he limped, which alone requires a thousand

atoning graces. People consented to overlook Byron's short leg at the time, because he was a peer of the realm and the author of "Childe Harold"; and it was also a kind of makeweight. Pope was of a delicate and wizen frame of body. But he had not the plebeian air, and he was thought worthy to be the intimate companion of men of the first distinction among his contemporaries. There was nothing in his way of talking or his general address to shock their prejudices, and his stunted growth, on the same principle as Byron's infirmity, served as a foil to his superior intellectual faculties.

The conversation of K. was never brilliant; but it bore evidence of a certain homage to culture acquired by contact with authors and artists. He had a tincture of literature, and was at home in some of the old poets. He admired Spenser and Goldsmith; his family read the author of "In Memoriam"; he had friends who could give an opinion about Shelley or Keats. In generosity of disposition nobody exceeded him. He kept a hospitable table. He was at all times ready to perform the rites of friendship in their most substantial shape. He had the most delicate way of conferring an obligation on any one I ever knew.

But he was a common sort of person notwithstanding, and in his literary aspirations he never, that I am aware, got beyond the formation round him of a small coterie of third-rate authors, who fraternized with a Manchester warehouseman for a consideration.

He did not live to see culture become more general, and his own daughter a writer on the Fine Arts. Emulation does much in these matters. In an Homeric atmosphere even a Lord Mayor has ere now quoted the author of the "Iliad," nay, and Horace into the bargain, in an after-dinner speech, putting us in mind of Butler's Pig and Blackbird. K. would have been content with a line from Wordsworth or a couplet from Longfellow. These are ticklish experiments; and they prove that his lordship understood Homer and Horace just as much as Boydell's Shakespear proves that the excellent alderman understood the writings of the English poet. The truth is that, for my immediate purpose, they prove something else. For Greek and Latin scholars now-a-days have wisely, as I think, grown rather more chary of making use of *foreign* quotations. Ends of Greek and Latin are reserved for the Mansion-House. Mr. Gladstone became satisfied with citing his favourite epic in the version of Pope. The classics have migrated

from Whitehall to Guildhall. A corporate body is the literary heir of Mæcenas.

Then there was —, one of the most good-natured fellows in the world; a tall, burly, awkward, shambling figure, half crippled by rheumatism, with square, massive features and a florid complexion. He was a man of the most extensive and varied information. He was a person of shrewd insight into matters, and his knowledge of common and general topics was positively very considerable. His opinion on any question of home policy was sure to be worth something, more or less; it would be nearly as good, probably, as a Cabinet Minister's, and better than an M.P.'s; **for** there would be more common sense and no party spleen. His acquaintance with localities and their products and specialities, again, was surprising. There was no part of England where he had not been, and of which he did not know more than you did, if it was worth knowing. He had the state of the markets and exchanges, and the prices current, at his fingers' ends. He could tell you what you had given for the coat on your back, or at least what he should have given for such another. You could not be long in his company without having an uncomfortable sensation that you had been appraised and scheduled. He had a born gift for valuation. He possessed unique and mysterious facilities for obtaining articles of domestic consumption at exceptional rates from parties whose address he was not exactly at liberty to divulge. This was his idiosyncrasy for specialism. He had a practical eye to the money-value of things—and of persons. He carried in his head every variety of useful knowledge, from the commercial anatomy of a dust-bin to a conversance with the trade of the port and city of London. He was a peripatetic museum, methodically classified, of the best and latest facts—best because latest. He was an encyclopædia of current intelligence. The ins and outs of most trades and crafts were spread like an open volume before him. But in the metaphysics of a matter he was at fault. He would have rolled his big head from side to side, and laughed right up from his stomach, if you had propounded the view of a question from an æsthetic point. If you had noted that a particular passage in a book—that, for instance, where Robinson Crusoe just saves himself from falling into the clutches of the savages by drawing up the ladder, and you tell him that you can never read it without being on pins and needles, your heart in

your mouth, till Crusoe is out of danger, he smiles, and informs you that he has a very fine copy in morocco of the most valuable edition of the work. I do not know what to say about his logic; at any rate, he would not have proceeded from visionary premises to rickety conclusions. He never beat about the bush: a paraphrast or word-painter would have appeared to him too fine a gentleman.

His was essentially a vulgar mind. He saw everything in a matter-of-fact light. He reduced all things to a matter-of-fact standard. He was no colourist. He wanted the imaginative faculty, and could not allow for the wind. For example, he could never be brought to comprehend a proverb. Why should people speak of the "early bird getting the worm," as if there was only one worm to be got, when the fact was that there were millions? Or again, of "rolling stones gathering no moss"—where was the advantage, if they should? This was the dry hard tone of his understanding. His learning was as multifarious as a wardrobe shop. In the course of his very wide range of inquiry and experience, he occasionally embraced certain uncommercial items of news, which he had picked up by accident, and had not happened to let go, as was usually the case with commodities not in busy demand. I remember that he entertained to the last a loose persuasion that Sir Philip Sidney was beheaded for high treason in the reign of King Charles II., and that "Lalla Rookh" was the poem by which Sir Thomas More hoped to transmit his name to posterity.

This man, big and tall as he was, sank down at last into the vastest depth of all without leaving a trace behind him. The secret was, that he was a very common sort of person. A stranger, who did not know who he was (how few did!), and who had a writ or two out, would have crossed over to the other side of the way.

Mrs. — was a painfully ordinary woman. The single idea, of which she was mistress, was subdivided and attenuated, till it became, like the ancient Greek dwarf, so small that you could not see it. She was a sort of imperfectly educated enthusiast: like Madame d'Albret, *bonne ame et sot esprit*, who patronized Madame de Maintenon in her widowhood and poverty. She was a theologian of a Sunday-school type, a distributor of pious tracts, of which the text was even thinner than the paper; a Mission-monger, who

let her domestic duties wait upon her correspondence with the Hawaiian group; a female Quixote with her eyes bandaged: a humble, unwitting bondwoman of other people's notions.

Her earthly habitation was whilom here; but her heart and treasure were in Polynesia. She considered it a more acceptable sacrifice to make clothes for the immature Hindoos than to be an handmaid to her husband and a light to his house. Like Mrs. Jellyby of yore, she united with her more honest than erudite acquaintance in providing stout European fabrics for the human fauna of the tropical zone, while thousands at home remained hungry and barefoot. This was *angélique bêtise*. She reminded one of the shoemaker and his wife in Grimm—with a difference. O my dear friends, if you ever admit ladies to Parliament—I hope you never will—do not vote for Mrs. Jellyby.

Religious persuasion, if it is to be effectual, should either be very strong or very sweet. A clergyman always thrives better, if he is a handsome fellow, provided he is not a dunce or a *mauvais sujet*. But our poor lady friend possessed no attractions of face or figure. She was not even a Madame d'Albret. She had no grace of manner or air. She wanted *physique*. Her most capital reasons for the faith which was in her were odds and ends of hackneyed truisms, the broken crumbs of wisdom fallen from other mouths. She talked by the book, and argued by rote. She had laid down no new lines of thought for herself. Her ideas, such as they were, ran in time-worn grooves. She could give no better account of her opinions than that they were her mother's and her grandmother's, and her adherence to them was serenely and stolidly imperturbable. They were as much heirlooms as the family teapot. They were not the processes of individual thought which, according to a learned author, distinguish us from the gods above us and the beasts beneath, but transmitted chattels like a house or a field; and not improbably she might have held it, as an American author puts the matter, little less than blasphemy to know more than those who went before her. Her belief in Sunday best, in the authentic unrevised version of the Bible, and in a pew in the parish church, was not to be shaken by all the men of genius in the universe.

Her family were commonplace people. A little foppishness would have set them off to advantage, and have been no such damnable offence. It would have been justifiable coxcombry. It

would have been a species of dandyism, which no reasonable being could have found it in his heart to condemn. The subject of the present notice has long since composed her head. But she left brothers and sisters a plentiful brood. She was not spared to witness the Great Wave of Salvationism, nor would her muscular energies have qualified her for a spiritual Bacchante.

I used to know a family in the North, whose connections were even more than respectable. They had a standing in the county, and enjoyed an easy fortune. They employed the most fashionable London milliners, attended the subscription balls, were scrupulous church-goers, and first-class contributors to the nearest book-stall. Nay, they possessed a library of reference, which included two copies of Tupper's "Proverbial Philosophy." But their understandings were on the narrow gauge. Their knowledge was second-hand. Their piety was of the false conventional stamp. They wanted *form* and flexibility. Of solid culture they had scarcely more than an agricultural labourer. Their ignorance and assumption resembled the sides of an isosceles triangle. Tropes and figures were not in their chart. The higher flights of the imagination formed a *terra incognita*, of which they had not a favourable opinion. The writer of works a little out of the beaten track was almost as much a *lusus naturæ* as the ornithorhynchus or the dodo. They exhibited the nett result of characters moulded by a normal boarding-school, a rustic clique, and a circulating library. Their grasp of a question was remarkably tenacious, but it was only one side of it—their own. Cause and effect were almost convertible terms. Of the literary world they had a special abhorrence and distrust. An author at large in the house, when other visitors were announced, was a highly disconcerting circumstance. They did not know, to begin with, where he came in the order of precedence, and hesitated to introduce him to the neighbouring villagers from fear of some embarrassing *contretemps*. A ferocious dog, at the worst, could only inoculate their acquaintance with hydrophobia; but a man of letters, whose opinions and information were beyond their plummet, was a far more dangerous, and at the same time an inferior, animal. They reversed the familiar maxim, *omne ignotum pro magnifico*. What they did not comprehend they scorned. In the view of these richly furnished minds a literary man, no matter how eminent he might be, was "a person who wrote" in the same way that a tinker is one who



mends saucepans. They measured him by their own bucolic standard, and on finding that he did not answer to it, discarded him as a dubious character. It was not with them as it is fast growing in towns, where the local clergyman is tolerated only, where he is a good kind of fellow; they looked upon him with a sort of awe; he was appointed to take the lady of the house into dinner, and the humble layfolk sorted themselves as they listed. The male representatives of this interesting type are usually grooms, jockeys, and gamekeepers disguised in broadcloth.

This intellectual crassitude one may call Provincialism. It is the darker side of the Rural Character and Life, but it extends to such places as Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, which are little better than overgrown country towns. London is the unique metropolis; and the rest of Great Britain is suburb and outskirt. The old-fashioned schoolbooks divide history into Sacred and Profane. But humanity may be similarly classified. These folks belonged to the Profane section; and their wealth and position merely made their absence of culture and of homage to it in others so much the more conspicuous. It was to such that Jesus Christ referred, when He said, "Let the dead bury their dead."

Here was a clear instance in which a little Podgerism would have been no enormity whatever. What grace, if they had but known it, would have been added to them by a degree of dotage upon things lifted above the vulgar level? A certain worship of the heroic, let it have been even somewhat uncritical, would have gone some way at least to round the circle of their perfections.

One may have an indifferent opinion of an author; but one is not, perhaps, to be decried as a blockhead on this account. A Quarterly Reviewer saw nothing in the writings of Mill, and his friends may have thought none the worse of him for it. A certain organ once issued its fiat, that the late author of the "Angel in the House" was one of the greatest of living poets; but it is presumed that those who differ from the oracle are not *ipso facto* individuals of inferior insight. Mr. — cannot see the advantage of republishing the literature of our ancestors; but he must not send me to Coventry if I confess an inability to agree with him. Another gentleman has favoured the world by disclosing certain undiscovered beauties in Crabbe; yet, sad to relate, I discern nothing but his dull prosaic realism and tiresome anatomical portraiture.

He did not select his personages on the plan of Mr. Lodge. He went to the parish register. The workhouse, or the lunatic asylum, or a broker's shop, would have been equally useful as material for an inventory. Gray portrayed in verse the departed dwellers in a hamlet—but it was with the feeling of a poet—in a series of vignettes. A good deal of this is mere spleen or prejudice possibly, or it may be predicated of all literary merit that it is more or less, after all, a matter of taste.

I can easily imagine a man to be a common person, who nevertheless reads the "Waverley Novels" once a year and owns a copy of Hume's "Essays," to which he does not so often turn. There is —, who carries the "Odes of Anacreon" about with him in his pocket wherever he goes, and rents a shooting-box. But this does not establish his superiority. On the contrary, the exception seems to prove the rule here. With Anacreon he begins and ends. His stock of ideas is exhausted. He has put all his eggs into one basket. If you were to attempt to discuss with him the merits of Tasso, or invite his attention to the beauties of Parnell, he would suspect there was some irony at the bottom of it, or at the best he would not know in what language Tasso wrote, or where Parnell came in the order of time. If you took him upon philosophy or metaphysics, it would be the same thing. You would get nothing for your pains. He would be as incapable of response as the Seven Sleepers, or as the spectre which Rip Van Winkle met upon the mountain. He would have said his say, "Anacreon was a great poet"—which everybody knows that he was not. I once knew a justice of peace for Surrey, who thought Shakespear "a clever man," and an old French governess who pronounced Montaigne a "nice" one. The mind in both cases was a measuring apparatus, which beyond a given point did not register. They could not define their terms.

Illiteracy is two-handed. In current parlance our greatest names are names, and little more. We hear Chaucer and Shakespear linked with Dryden and Pope: Bacon with Hobbes and Hobbes with Locke; and in the eyes of the average man and woman they are all members of one brotherhood with paper-makers, printers, and binders. Among the doleful inarticulate beings, who constitute Society, culture enjoys no solid standing or welcome. The characters and reputations most cherished and revered by real judges merely form items in a vocabulary of

fashionable patter and *argot* which the He and She "Don't-You-Knows" carry about with them, as travellers in foreign countries take conversational manuals. It is almost as if persons of literary or artistic refinement should hold no other portfolio, and as if intellectual accomplishments were such another craft as the commerce in daily necessities.

But take a man who was not half so genteel as an *attaché*, and who avoided broadcloth and French boots from inclination or need, but who could relish Rousseau and Madame de Staël, Jacob Behmen and Erasmus of Rotterdam, Browning's Poems and Horne's "Farthing Epic," Ruskin's "Stones of Venice" and Herbert Spencer's "Sociology" or Darwin's "Descent of Man," and it might be safely pronounced of such an one, that he was no ordinary person, if indeed he was not a more distinguished character than an M.P., or a Secretary's Secretary, whose only authors are Hansard and Dod.

It is very seldom that eminent men of culture unite, like Charles Darwin, a richly-stored mind and a royal intellect with a gentlemanly deportment and a private fortune. But the world even there was not to be robbed of its discount. Darwin was also a freethinker. How much better, quoth Mrs. Grundy, to own sound theological opinions, than to be a mere man of genius! And how much easier, Madam! The majority of scholars and scientists are deficient in Darwin's personal advantages. They have not the gentleman look. They have not country seats and fair estates. I have met with men of unprepossessing exteriors, who have risen from nothing, and yet who are in their way what Darwin was in his—prodigies of accomplishments and cyclopædias of information. *Qu'importe?* They do not go to church. They entertain cynical views of society. They do not know how to enter a room. They are not the sort of people whom you could introduce to your friends. They may be very clever; but truly cleverness is not everything. So between two stools the man of parts, who is not also a good-looking fellow, a man of fortune, and an orthodox Christian, falls to the ground; and he has it demonstrated to him, moreover, by his acquaintances, that it would have been more fortunate if he had been as destitute of pretensions as themselves. Farther the delicacy of unkindness cannot well go.

A late Duke of Leeds and the second Duke of Wellington come within the category which I am describing. The first used to go

about in a tweed jacket, smoking a short pipe; and the last dressed in shabby black, wore a silver watch and chain in the streets, and (to clench the matter) had, like Lord John Russell, weak eyes. Neither was of sufficient independent calibre to atone for these eccentricities. The valet of the Right Honourable Thomas Grenville, who died many years ago at a patriarchal age, and whom I recollect coming on messages to my father's house, was beyond comparison the finest gentleman of the three. He held himself superbly, like his employer, and had the patrician look.

Two of the most prominent connoisseurs of the last century were remarkable for the meanness of their personal appearance. They had the instinct and eye of a curiosity-dealer for objects of art. But no one would have divined them to be what they were. They were as insignificant as Pope the poet; but they possessed neither his literary pretensions nor his finished ease of manner. Their gait and speech were equally plebeian. It was said of Wilkes, that he had ugly features, and squinted, but that his fascinating address made ample amends for these physical deficiencies. It was not so here; nor was it that our contemporaries were wanting in urbanity or *bonhomie*, for they had a fair share of both these desirable qualities. But, in short, their intellectual bent, if it deserved that name, only threw their vulgarity into higher relief, like coloured figures on a dark gold ground in some mosaic. What demon cursed them in their cradle with an appetite for *vertu* and morocco leather? One has a feeling that they would have been more comfortable in their original obscurity. *Bene qui latuit, bene vixit.*

It is a matter of notoriety that few men of intellect or genius have been known to turn collectors, and that where they have, it has been in a half-hearted, indecisive way, as if they were not perfectly satisfied that it was the right thing. Genuine collectors are, in fact, a distinct order of mammalia, with some special phrenological development awaiting scientific definition. The true antiquary, as a rule, repudiates the notion that he is of the fraternity. Perhaps he is not rich enough; at any rate, he has higher game in view. He gathers after the manner of the bee, not of the jackdaw. He does not care to enter into the pursuit of knacks and gewgaws; to form a library of lifeless leather-bound paper and three-halfpenny ware to the impoverishment of

the mill and the cook, or to accumulate miraculous wreckage and *débris*.

The upgrowth of an unhealthy spirit of emulation among persons, whose minds have been imperfectly cultivated or trained, keeps the market for all classes of antiquities, meanwhile, sufficiently brisk. Probably the least satisfactory reason for amassing curiosities is that which is also the commonest, because some one else does. Why should you buy rat-tailed spoons because some excellent friend buys them? This is nearly the least wise form which flattery can assume. The game of Follow my Leader or *Cornichon va devant* is apt soon to become a dull affair. My word may be securely taken for it, that the auction mart and the dealer wax plump on such unsteadfast enthusiasm, which imparts to all descriptions of property a peripatetic character, and makes them wanderers up and down the market during their entire existence. The fickle and not very experienced amateur importantly contributes to save the *bric-a-brac* merchant and the hammer-wielder from putting up their shutters.

There is a curious propensity among those, who are ostensibly persons of no special position to engage in genealogical researches by way of proving their own descent or their wives' from some eminent individual. It seems a vulgar fallacy, for whether one is less eminent or more so than certain predecessors, the gain is alike dubious. Apart from technical considerations, if a man shews a superiority to his foregoers, the merit and satisfaction are his own, and if he derogates from them, his are the misfortune and reproach.

Vulgarity appears often to consist in the difficulty which many find of comprehending the most manifest incongruities of circumstance and place, and in a natural indifference to the feelings of others. They are perpetually committing the most flagrant improprieties without being conscious of them. They constantly offend those in whose company they happen to be without the least malice prepense, and violate the rules of decorum at every turn in complete good faith. R—— read the Bible aloud to his family with a glass of brandy-and-water at his elbow, and he did not perceive the want of keeping. To have pointed it out to him would have been useless. He would have set your stricture down to contracted views, or have resented it as an oblique sneer at his religious principles. The American lady detected no im-

propriety in describing herself and her neighbours as "Hell-bent on Heaven."

When her Majesty the Queen died the other day, some of the worthies who had sent out cards of invitation to their friends for dinners or balls, cancelled the arrangement because—I regret that I do not know exactly how to complete the sentence. The step was meant to demonstrate their loyalty. What did it demonstrate? "What was Hecuba to *them* or *they* to Hecuba?"

An honest American, who was not pleased (from modesty, it is thought) to give his name, once attempted a kind of supplement to Gray's "Elegy," where his critical vision detected what appeared to be, on the part of the original writer, an insufficient admission of a future state. These proposed intercalary stanzas, however, have not been so far amalgamated by the editors of the Bard of Stoke Pogis, and the poem still goes at large in the very form which it wore when it alarmed the transatlantic gentleman's theological sensibilities. Had he met with greater encouragement, this pious inquirer might have discovered and supplied similar imperfections in the writings of Shakespear and Chaucer, and with as much felicity as Croxall in his additional cantos to the "Faery Queen." But there are certain things which one prefers to take as one finds them. It is better to put up with a broken statue by Lysippus than to have it completed by a stonemason.

The author of the "House that Jack Built" was an honest man, and by no means a common sort of person. He was to the full as genteel as Southey or Lamb, and would have passed for a doctor of divinity or a Bencher of the Temple as soon as either of them. But he kept at one time a coffee-shop in Gracechurch Street, which was a failure (an additional circumstance against him); and he wrote "The Queen's Matrimonial Ladder" and other works equally flavoured with a mixed spice of facetiousness and high treason. The fashionable world sent him to Coventry as a low-bred fellow, and would not shake him even by the fingertips gingerly to save themselves from being in the next squib. He was not thought, perhaps, the sort of man to be readily won, or they might have whispered him, "Good even, good Robin Hood!" Hone used a quill plucked from a porcupine's armoury. *Gare a qui le touchait!* He was as pungent as Cobbett and as fearless. I imagine that, on the whole, he was more popular, and more influential in helping forward the bloodless Revolution of 1832.

Dr. Wolcot, better known as Peter Pindar, is usually described, not altogether without justice, as a vulgar and coarse writer. But, apart from him having been also a most courageous and influential one, there was a side to his character, which was and is very little known; for he could be serious and pathetic, when he chose, and was no mean artist. One of the most touching traits about this eminent man was the pleasure, which it gave him, when he was blind, to sit in the room, surrounded by the pictures, on which he had loved to gaze in earlier days, still surveying them in his mind's eye, and soothed by the companionship.

I have heard a member of Parliament and a wholesale dealer seriously declare that he would be ready to jump over the table, if he could only find out who his grandfather was! This leaves it readily inferable that his origin was obscure; but it does not so much shew that as that his antecedents were the least vulgar part about him. Unlike a late noble lord, he wished that he could make out a pedigree, and perhaps he might not have been displeased to have the means of passing for what he was not. He was ashamed of being a self-raised and self-helped 'man. This is a very ridiculous sort of vanity; but it is pleasant to think that it is not so very common an one as might be suspected—in the first generation of *nouveaux riches*. Architects of their own fortunes do not choose, as a rule, to blot out their youth for the benefit of their successors, and pretend that they were never young and poor. A man is not necessarily common, because he is a draper or a tailor, but because his hereditary instincts or his personal associations straiten his vision and his judgment. Unusual mental gifts so seldom accompany the founder of a wealthy house that families often relapse into obscurity at an early stage, and the pace of declension is apt to be accelerated by environments. At each step downward the drifting descendant of some worthier predecessor takes the cue more and more from those, not above, but beneath, him. He learns to adapt himself to the ways of the great majority, into which he will be ultimately absorbed.

Our habits of thought, if not the texture of our minds, are largely influenced by early training. The boy who goes from a public school to one of our universities, and thence to some church preferment, or the principalship of a great seminary like Christ's Hospital or Merchant Taylors, is (except by a sheer 'miracle') crippled for life. His mind becomes awry and at an oblique angle.

He is colour-blind. He has power to see objects and arguments from one point of view only and in one light, as a builder would regard the Alps with interest solely in relation to the clearance of the site for houses and shops. His ideas, like one of the old prognostications, are strictly regulated for one meridian. He is as a fixed star moving on its own axis within its own narrow orbit. His microcosm is composed of men who were educated on the same principle, and who have, like him, been unfortunate enough not to divorce themselves from the cramping and stunting agencies of early days. His *dii majores* are not the great men of his era, but the dons of his college. The Dean of Christchurch or the Master of Baliol is a more important personage in his eyes than Gladstone or Tennyson. The flimsy theological speculations of an Archdeacon of Middlesex shut out from his sight the records on paper of Darwin and Huxley, Lyell and Herbert Spencer, which might have helped to make a man of him. He has heard of Mr. Browning and Mr. Ruskin by report or in reviews; but the head master of St. Paul's or the preacher at the Chapel Royal is a hero after his own honest heart.

He recognizes, when you mention them, the names of Mr. Dobell and Mr. Locker, and he is acquainted with the writings of the late Lord Houghton, who was not a mere author, like Shakespeare, but a peer and a *virtuoso*, and, by the way, had an academical education, which Shakespeare had not. Our good friend does not scent the air of the Upper Sixth in his lordship's "Lay of the Humble," or any deficiency in perspective or shadow, but agrees with a Westminster Reviewer in considering it rather fine. Possibly, if Tupper had been called to the Upper House, the critics would have brought to light certain hidden beauties in the "Proverbial Philosophy." That great work was honoured by the approbation of her late Majesty, and the author might have received at all events the laureateship, if not a peerage, had he not taken premature refuge in Abraham's expansive bosom.

At a public entertainment, where such one-sided persons as I have attempted to describe preponderate, an ordinary man of letters sits below the salt, or he is placed between a gold medallist and a senior optime, who takes an oar in the Oxford eight, and so unites physical with intellectual distinction; and it goes for nothing that his works are favourably known, wherever English-speaking men live. A member of the Royal Society would strike



such an assemblage as a less appropriate toast than a member of the Court of the Grocers' Company, who is a drysalter in the daytime. If a man, who has shaken off his scholastic swaddling clothes, and turned author, dedicates his volume to his *olim* instructor, the latter contents himself with observing that, in the lines of inscription, his degree at Oxford has been omitted; or, if the same worthy receives a copy of verses, he points out the absence of a comma or an accent. This arises from his mental gravitation. This is the Alpha and Omega of his insight. It is precisely the same thing if you offer your book to a typographical expert: he reads it for the *errata*, while a friend on the turf throws it down as worthless, because you disagree from him regarding the action of a race-horse.

I have never dined at my Inn of Court, nor, although I am a life-member, have I been invited to a social gathering or a grand evening. That is a compliment reserved for royal or noble outsiders and for the leading ornaments of one of the least literate of all professions. Possibly we might not understand each other, and it is better as it is.

Even genius is by no means so fortunate as to be without its less happy aspects. When Carlyle confessed in the hearing of Thackeray his inability to understand why people thought so highly of Titian, and the other quietly demanded whose fault that was, what observation could be sillier, what reproof more appropriate? We are told that Cruikshank ascribed the success of Dickens to his employment of that writer as a compiler of letter-press to accompany his own artistic productions, while Dickens spoke of the latter as a sort of redundancy; and the doubt hence arises, whether great wits are not allied to childishness as well as insanity? We do not like to hear of a poet in need: but it is at least equally unsatisfactory, not to him perhaps, but to us, to be told that a master of the romantic and ideal school of composition has his own stockbroker, and is heavily afflicted with social monotheism, the *auri sacra fames*. It shews too large an admixture of method with the madness, too much adulteration of the holy frenzy proper to bards with connoisseurship in securities. It begins to look as though this superhuman *afflatus* were not what one had deemed it to be, but some Semitic theatrical property of which the owner can divest himself, like the College gown, while he steps into the City, or sits down to balance his cash-book.

Among strange and monstrous births may be comprised one which occurred in the accomplished Burney family. One of them was a schoolmaster. He kept an establishment for young gentlemen at Greenwich. The director of the Burneyan Academy was an original character in his way ; there is a portrait of him among the illustrations to Madame D'Arblay's Diary, as well as some particulars of his career. The father of the present writer recollected that a standard charge in the half-yearly account was a debit for birches purchased and applied. This was a novel method of making the parent pay for his son's sorrow ; it was beating the boy with his own rod ; it was extracting from the birch, with true financial instinct, not only the familiar ointment, but a respectably weighty crop of half-crowns. Charles Burney possibly missed his vocation. He should have become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and would no doubt have forestalled Mr. Lowe in his great fiscal experiment on lucifer matches.

The schoolmaster, the more one looks at him, the more he seems to be certainly a species standing by himself, and intellectually bounded by certain impassable limits of latitude and longitude. The ordinary mental mechanism provided for the rest of mankind is by some dispensation exchanged for one especially adapted to his professional requirements, much as is the case with an auctioneer ; and one specimen of either is as like another as two examples of a patented brand in commerce. In both the brain is a map or chart in which, by a subtle economy, merely such details are filled in as their functions demand. The schoolmaster graduates, but does not develop. You have your schoolmaster simple, your schoolmaster parson, your schoolmaster archdeacon, your schoolmaster archbishop. The old lines are extended, without being widened, like the metals of a permanent way. The main difference between an ordinary pedagogue and an archiepiscopal one is the augmented power for mischief. Our great public schools are the forcing-pits from which these freaks of human nature emerge. They have been the same probably from the time when Dionysius kept school at Corinth. The die has not been lost. Goldsmith's Dr. Primrose owes all the worship which he has received to the handling of the author. We have before us Goldsmith's *beau idéal* of a country clergyman and teacher of the eighteenth century. The writer of the "Vicar of Wakefield" was a school usher himself once, not by choice, but (as it were) *formâ pauperis*,

## NOT UNCOMMON PEOPLE

and probably an indifferent one; and he perhaps evolved from his inner consciousness and direct observation that portraiture which we find so pleasing. Yet, pleasing as it may be, it is easy to divine the class of school and understanding, with which we are brought for the time into contact.

No amount of erudition would have altered Dr. Primrose for the better; it would have brought with it little else than bigotry, intolerance, and assumption, and would have made him a far less agreeable friend to his contemporaries and to us. The man of learning and the man of genius are like two straight lines which never meet. It has been pronounced by no mean authority, that a mere scholar is a mere ass.

But the monotone and technist in many departments is apt to resemble a pivot, round which in his own conceit the world centrifugally revolves, as where you try to discuss with a normal lawyer the *principia* of his business, he can only cite cases and judgments from the last volume of Reports, or if you ask an auctioneer his opinion of an author, he will answer that the last copy of his book fetched such or such a sum under the hammer—his hammer—for he recognizes no other.

A late Bishop of Chester aptly observed that “genius is all very well in its way,” and seemed rather to feel, that it would be a national misfortune, if it were to become too common. The apprehension is baseless. It will certainly never embarrass the Episcopal Bench, or endanger its stability. In a couple of centuries at such a place as the Blue Coat School one cannot point to more than four names; and is it not much the same in all our great seminaries? A pity, too, were it otherwise: a pity both for genius and its opposite.

An exception to the prevailing rule as to the illiteracy and narrow sympathies of the clerical profession, more particularly that section of it which unluckily makes tuition its province, was Nicholas Udall, Master of Eton College; and we lay down his “Ralph Roister Doister” with a regret that our knowledge of the writer has not been confined to his production of one of the most admirable dramatic pieces in our language. To discover that he was a pedagogue and a martinet is an unfelicitous redundancy. In such a case the labours of the biographer are positive surplusage.

Literary men of no family, who have made a name and a position for themselves in society, are not, generally speaking,

unduly pretentious. The profession to which they owe their rise has made them, for the most part, superior to these paltry airs and graces. But there have been, nay, are royalists in this republic who cannot say that their fathers were Prime Ministers, as Walpole could, or trace back their lineage as far as Scett, but who aspire to be honorary associates in the aristocracy of letters : *blasé*, languid Exquisites, who profess to be scarcely acquainted with their humbler brethren even by name or sight, and who are under the embarrassing necessity of buying the largest size of waste-paper basket to accommodate the propitiatory gift-copies laid upon their altars.

They make a rather sorry figure, and occupy a neutral position, of which it is difficult to give a very agreeable account. They are somewhere midway between earth and air, and belong to neither. If they are unable to create an Abbotsford or a Strawberry Hill, they do the next best thing : they build a detached house in a fashionable suburb, use gilt-edged paper, and perhaps take a decayed literary gentleman into pay as private secretary and librarian, the last by way of illustrating what a poor creature a mere author is.

All specialism is narrowing and debasing. Thought and sympathy are not one, but manifold. Folklore, for instance, may be a good thing in its way, yet are we to live by it alone ? Shall those gentlemen, who advocate and promote it, be suffered to lay the rest of us on a bed of Procrustes ? A theory, like a jest, may be carried too far, pressed too much home. Is the Folklore Society to serve with a *Quo Warranto* any one who writes on that particular theme without having previously paid his subscription ?

There is another class which I hardly know how to describe to my satisfaction. Perhaps they may be set down as *second-hand* persons. The second-hand man and the second-hand lady are well-known varieties of our species. We come across them in all the paths of life, perhaps in some cases without being aware of it. There is — : see how he greets you with a perfectly fraternal grasp of the hand, and features bathed in sunshine ! But come to the point with him ; broach a matter of business ; touch him a little on some rather vulnerable spot, and lo ! the charming prospect changes like a transformation scene, the genial smile has gone, the veneer has come away, like the coating on a gilt half-penny, and all that there is left stands before you “ when unadorned

adorned the least,"—a saying which (in its original form) Athenæus ascribes to Charmos of Syracuse, a writer who lived before Sheridan. These might almost be described as *plated* persons—persons formed of base metal washed with silver.

Thackeray, in his "Book of Snobs," did not necessarily enter so much or so deeply into the present subject as might at first sight be supposed; for a man may be a snob and not a common person, just as the converse may be true. The genus pervades every class of society, from the Order of Ancient Foresters to the Order of the Garter. It has crossed the Atlantic, and exhibits a fungous growth among rich American and Australasian adventurers, whose cue it is to gather up, not what they want or appreciate, but what they think that their betters do.

It used to be the general opinion in the dark ages, that royal personages were the light and salt of the world. But people of genius have pushed them out of their place, have robbed them of their ancient supremacy. Men and women of genius are to the community at large what the ether is to the grosser elements, and what the leaven is to the dough. But they are a small and shrinking minority. The population ostensibly increases, but the intellectual atmosphere grows more and more plumbous and opaque, more and more a mart for buyers and sellers.

A speculation was once hazarded as to the ultimate destiny of a given million of babies. Probably of this number 975,000 or more are apt to be wholly immaterial to the planet, to which they eventually add a slender *stratum*, except as manual factors in the labour market. Their function in life is to eat, drink, work, sleep; and they fondly conceive, that they understand and appreciate what intelligent existence is.

A separate paper might perhaps be instructively devoted to modern suburban social types; but it should be founded on close personal study, and the result might be doubtful. Our suburbs are not so pleasant as they were through the encroachments of the builder, yet they might be better than they are, were it not for their inhabitants; just as country houses are so often found with one drawback—the owners. One should visit a locality *incognito*, and quit it, notebook in pocket, without leaving a clue to one's whereabouts. But for a man to paint *ad vivum* on the spot the parson of his own parish, the surveyor, the solicitor, the merchant, the half-pay officer, the retired tradesman, the mysteri-

ous *litterateur* (of course Editor of the *Times*), the Principal Librarian of the British Museum (there is one in nearly every district of pretensions), and the millionaire monopolist: then the other sex, the Lady Bountiful, the Lady Patroness, the Lady Canvasser, the Lady Secretary, the Sportswoman—all with their most loveable coteries—would form a task too hazardous by half: a bear among overturned honeycombs would by comparison be enviable.

In the eighteenth century, in the lifetime of Dr. Johnson, and even in the earlier part of the succeeding one, the citizen of London gathered round him in his own house with satisfaction and pride men and women of education, culture, and fair repute; it was a case of Giving and Taking, not exactly in a commercial sense, yet in a mutually agreeable and profitable one. Now the corresponding class surrounds himself with his affluent acquaintances, who buy with him or sell with him, and renews at his own table or his own fireside the suspended or incomplete conversation in Capel Court, the Coal Exchange, or the Baltic, on topics of common concern—the coinage of *drachmai* out of some elastic and vulgar commodity. His main dependence, apart from his establishment, his table, and the family toilette, is the hour at which he dines. Balbus dines at his grandsire's supper hour. He follows the mode of the Court—at a distance.

In all the more fashionable centres outside the city and the town, you meet to satiety with gentlemen and ladies, to whose residences and other domestic and personal appurtenances you cannot in any way object. But these individuals have not merely nothing to communicate to you beyond the gossip of the day, but let you see that they will go so far as to resent the intrusion of facts or subjects, which for them are void of significance. The late Mr. Carlyle defined such phenomena as Clotheshorses; a greater than him, in the "Merchant of Venice," refers to them as "proper folks' pictures." Frequently these quasi-Arcadians canvas among themselves certain commercial mysteries, to which the key is in their own pockets, or if they overstep the boundary of current commonplace, they offer a sentiment, which appears to be an heirloom from an antecedent era. A too level equilibrium of vision and thought is characteristic of the more ordinary sort of people; they have an actual surfeit of the *mens sana in corpore sano*. There is a curious fallacy on the part of many, who have

accumulated splendid fortunes, perhaps without the opportunity of gaining culture or mixing with those who have ; and it is the dream of settling in the autumn of life in some rural neighbourhood, in a fine house, surrounded by a handsome acreage. Provision is made for everything—with a single momentous exception. A man must have an atmosphere, a background, a setting. He must not be all front, like a shop in a pantomime ; there must be the power of retrospection, some link of union with the past, the succour of ancestry in eking out his own deficiencies. One should not be able to make an inventory of him by a *coup d'œil*, or to take a sounding of his mind at sight. It should not be possible to beat his intellectual bounds, like those of a parish, or to peg down the lines, beyond which his vision is objectless and colour-blind. It is a sad disappointment to fix yourself in a locality, where there are only two classes of people : those whom you do not want to know, and those who do not want to know you. Common persons resemble a building one room deep or the perspective illusion of a drop-scene. They remind you of the painted cardboard figures in the toyshops. No two are precisely similar, yet no two differ very greatly, like a couple of impressions of the same print with varieties in minor particulars.

Self-contained folks constitute a section of the present family, with which it is well nigh desperate to succeed. They draw a certain line round them with a piece of invisible chalk, within which they stagnate, and beyond which they will not go, or let you advance. They are enchanted with themselves. They treat the rest of the world as flattering foils. They feel that they possess all necessary and eligible qualifications. In your views there must be something strangely wrong, because they do not accord with their own, which they acquired at the entrance on their careers with their other chattels, and which are equally to serve them all their days. They take their ideas, as they do their wives, for better, for worse ; and that these grow like remainder biscuit on other long voyages is not to them to be rendered apparent.

The self-contained man or even woman must perforce be gregarious and sociable in matters of business. It is in mental culture and points of intellectual inquiry that the feeling operates. The city gentleman frequents his club and his Masonic Lodge, and occasionally asks a select circle to dinner on commercial grounds ; but he does not incur the risk of disturbing his aptitude for his

vocation by going outside his set. His wife and daughters pay their calls; his sons, if they have left school, have what they term their pleasures; but he, as a general rule, returns home in the evening, and declines to quit the premises or the chimney-corner without due notice in writing. The sole kind of intercourse, which yields mutual improvement, is found by him or his surroundings to be impracticable. Correspondence with other minds, the fellowship of thinkers, a communion through books with the life, experience, and wisdom of all the antecedent ages, may strike some as advantageous, if not delightful; but to the normal middle-class Englishman the pressure and strain of his pecuniary affairs, and his poor, sordid artificial existence, seem to be insuperable barriers to a lucrative exchange of views and opinions between threshold and threshold. For him those, whom we miscall the ancients, amount to no more than a general expression. Their human attributes, their cognate properties, their specific personalities, are to him a Pandora's box, which he is content to leave unopened. He dimly retains the vague and shallow notions of the classics, which he imbibed at school from preceptors not much more advanced than himself. If his hopes and wants are apt to expand with successive disclosures of the horizon, they exclusively conduce to a common end—the augmentation of material resources. The golden mean is an adage, which he recommends to others, but which he only accepts in principle. This mischief and malady are due to cramped and false social conditions, from which the classes above and below are more exempt.

You not unfrequently find some of these phenomena distinguished by an intense individuality. Your acquaintance is the central orbit, round which in his conceit everybody and everything else turn. He does not desire the opinion of others, nor any discussion of their value; if you are discreet, you will not traverse his eulogy of his own theories and other belongings by adducing extraneous anecdotes. Mention that you possess some precious volume, his criticism will be, that a copy of a book which he bought forty years ago for sixpence would fetch a devilish large price at an auction. Describe an unique example of old porcelain or plate, he will immediately recall to memory something of the kind which he picked up for a song in former days at a broker's shop in the Midlands. Bring out of your pocket a superb



numismatic gem of the best period of art, for which a hundred collectors would part with their little fingers, and he informs you, after glancing at it for a moment, that he has, laid aside in trust, a marvellous little lot in mint state of coins of George IV. or William IV. He is, in short, no hand at cross purposes; he does not perceive the utility of mixing issues; *cuique suum*; it is his rôle and cue exclusively to pose as the caretaker and advertiser of his own property with the auctioneer's hammer making sweet music in his ear. Your lots are *floci, nihili, pili*, unless, by the way, he can take them over at his figure, your memoranda inclusive.

A type of not uncommon people, which, according to the humour of the critic, irritates or diverts, is the decadent gentleman or gentlewoman, who at this present moment pursues some tolerably humble calling, but who can tell you about forerunners, whose deeds and fame make one blush for one's own obscurity. These excellent folks are naturally of too lofty an extraction to recognize modern text-books on heraldry and family history; their house was in existence before printing, almost before writing, was known. But they have a pedigree by heart and dates at their fingers' ends. Stern fate compels them to reside in unpretentious quarters, and their belongings are in keeping. Did they not come over, however, with that inevitable Norman? Were they not at Agincourt with Henry V.? Has not Charles II. been said to have dined with them at their ancestral mansion in the West?

From such a portrait-gallery as we have been visiting together it is a long step to a different atmosphere and subject-matter. An Essay "On the Look of a Gentleman" has been formerly written by one, in whose footsteps the present writer is unworthy to tread. Certain accomplishments are indispensable to that character, yet their possession is far indeed from constituting it; and a larger number of persons of moderate intellectual endowments have been recognized as gentlemen than of those of an infinitely higher order of understanding, deficient in the training and fine instincts which we associate with the idea.

## XXV

### NEMO

"Nobody is my name,  
That beareth Everybody's blame."

—"Nobody," a Poem, by Nobody.

MR.—I crave His Honour's pardon—Sir Nicholas Nemo is a personage for whom I may say that we all feel the most unbounded respect. He is a gentleman, nay, a knight, who for lineage and blood is second to none, and who is of infinitely greater consequence than his junior contemporary Mister Everybody. I address myself with superlative satisfaction to the task of demonstrating the importance of His Honour, and the inevitable interest which must attach to an essay of which His Honour is the keystone. His Honour is endowed with rather peculiar and rare powers. His Honour can accomplish with a facility which is highly enviable what Mister Everybody cannot. Hence springs the celebrity of His Honour, and hence His place here as the Hero of the Situation. Nemo is my theme, and Nemo my song.

For none save Nemo can tell truly what the morrow shall bring. None can count with naked eye the stars in the firmament but this Nemo. Upon those broad shoulders rest responsibilities which it would turn any other brain even to contemplate at a distance. In meditating on Nemo, as it is my daily use to do, the thoughts mechanically wander in the direction of the Phoenix, when I look at that extraordinary gift which resides in Him of achieving without visible effort matters beyond the reach, scope, and faculty of other mortals—if indeed there should not happen to be something removed above our weak temporary state, something superior to this friable humanity, a subtle link with a yet inedited order of creation, in Nemo. Is one at liberty, then, to figure Nemo to oneself as an Abstraction, a Shadow, an Incorporeal Nonentity, a Jack o' Lanthorn, a Will-o'-the-Wisp, an *ignis fatuus*, a Robin Goodfellow, a Brownie? Nay, Sir Nemo is a knight of ancient fame. It is His proud and somewhat special position to

have lived before Eden. He recalls the plantation of it most vividly, and can guide you, if you have curiosity on the subject, to the exact spot where the apple-tree stood. He knew it a sapling. More glibly than Lyell or Darwin can. He discourse to you of earlier worlds. He can make out the plural theory without the aid of the planets. He is their ancestor. It seems to him but yesterday that the moon had no Man.

His contemporary Adam originally laid to His charge the eating of the apple, but Nemo is in a position to depose from ocular testimony that Adam picked the fruit, and with true politeness handed it to his lady, who had the first bite and let him have the rest, as it was not ripe. Cain insinuated that Nemo had killed Abel, and, before He had quite recovered from this annoyance, Noah did what was a little wrong, and set it down to Nemo. These were very great trials. Nemo remembers them well. Yet he was considerably older than Methuselah, when the latter departed prematurely—prematurely, at least, looking at Nemo, who is still among us in unbroken health and spirits. Why should we be so inconsiderate and incredulous as to doubt the existence of the Wandering Jew, whom Nemo has frequently seen, and with whom he more than once dined, as you and I might do? He cherishes among his more modern recollections the first departure of that noted celebrity on his travels and the farewell shake of the hand. Nemo has shot in Robin Hood's bow, and has crossed quarterstaves with Little John. He saw Tell draw the arrow, and Columbus break the egg. Later men have thoughtlessly wronged him by feigning themselves the discoverers of crackling and the Philosopher's Stone.

Such is, was, and ever shall remain the *prestige* of Nemo, that people have sometimes advanced their own interests by passing off as Him, and have even travelled under that Incognito, like Ulysses in the cave of Polyphemus.

It is a great point in one's favour to have existed always. The gain is at once obvious and vast. The plans of ordinary persons are perpetually thwarted through such a cause; but it is not so with Nemo. The hundred generations of men that have passed away were His intimates. Countless generations to come will be the same. They will find Him here, not gone. So far from the Impossible coming amiss to Him, He is rather partial to it. *Nemo tenetur ad impossibile*. It is His custom to begin just where others

leave off. He has completed most valuable undertakings which His modesty restrains him from making public. Nemo, in point of fact, anticipated all our social benefactors. He is the Great Foretaller.

I fear that I shall scarcely be credited if I mention a few of the remarkable capabilities of this Phoenix-ian Nemo, if I furnish a mere specimen of His surprising wealth of resource, prodigious fertility of understanding, and indestructible elasticity of temperament. Unlike Homer Nemo never naps. *Nemo solus satis sapit.* *Nemo est ab omni parte beatus.* *Nemo sua sorte contentus.* What is most marvellous, *Nemo dat quod non habet.*

When Sir Nicholas is in England, He is popularly known as Mister Nobody; for He has naturally disdained to mix with the common throng of titled ephemerides. His position is one of those few things on which Society has thoroughly made up its mind, and, which is even more unusual, to the complete satisfaction of the person concerned. The virtues of Mister Nobody are fully recognized. All the world is in love with Him. He succeeds in all His enterprises.\* He can see through a keyhole perfectly, when the key is there. He takes snuff while He is asleep. He rides on the whirlwind habitually and from choice.

There are, at the same time, it must be confessed, some accounts, on which Mister Nobody's shoes are rather dangerous to walk in. Listen to what Mister Nobody's enemies have got to say. He let the Greeks into Troy. We cry shame upon Him! He has lost many a battle, and has committed murders out of number. He invented Red Tape. He told fibs about certain very sensible and conscientious gentlemen in office, whom He privately called Jacks.

But it is to be said He has not always met with fair play. Now, Mister Somebody broke the cat's saucer, and pretended that it was Mister Nobody. The former Mister sold Government records to a buttermilk, and the latter Mister had to bear the brunt. Mister Somebody called a certain City a hotbed of roguery and rottenness, and when they threatened to expose him, he referred them to Mister Nobody. Somebody mismanaged affairs in the Crimea years and years ago, and when he was challenged, pointed to Mister Nobody, and Mister Somebody was had before a Royal Commission, just, for form's sake, but poor Mister Nobody was punished.

## NEMO

With all his faults and misfortunes, however, Mister Nobody lords it in this country quite as He likes. It is thought that we shall end in being governed by this great commoner. Long live King Nobody the First! *Nemo est hæres viventis*. For unless King Somebody and his friends, Mister Somebody Else and Mister Somebody Else Besides, take good heed, Mister Nobody will carry it by universal acclamation, and be the founder of a line of kings.

His Majesty will have a very large circle of political supporters, who will have a handsome provision made for them out of what remains of the National Property when King Somebody (the Last) has completed certain arrangements against a rainy day. There will be Baron Nemo, Viscount Nemo, Earl Nemo, Marquis Nemo, Duke Nemo, H.R.H. Nemo, H.R. and G.I.H. Nemo, all of whom, as it is superfluous to mention, are personages of the utmost consequence and (all preliminaries waived) illustrious, and are not, on any pretence, to be mixed up with the Uncalendared.

The court of Nemo I. will be the most splendid which creation has ever seen. For that Great Mogul (of the *futurè*) understands the value of Ceremonial Observances and Regal Pageantry. This predestined Prince of Men, this *Rex Futurus*—not Arthur, but Nemo—is a Conservative in the largest and most generous sense: He is an advocate for keeping all the best things, whether appertaining to Himself or to other people. But He will go farther. For He already speaks to those about Him of uniting in the hands of one statesman the at present independent dignities of Prime Minister, Master of the Ceremonies, Lord Chamberlain, and Lord Warden of Our Royal and Imperial Short-Horns. He holds that it will be an excellent, yet not unpopular stroke to commute the fees and perquisites of Our Court Poet for a Patent of Nobility; and under the new Nemo *régime* it will devolve on another great Officer of State, Our Court Historian, to edit an August Periodical Publication of an entirely novel description, to be called OUR COURT SAYINGS AND DOINGS, BY OURSELVES, of which the piquancy is calculated to prove so irresistible, that its sale will be highly remunerative to Us. For as this Bretwalda of yet unfolded years truly remarks (of course to those in His confidence merely), the praiseworthy hunger for penetrating the Eleusinian veil, which shrouds the Inner Life of Royalty, clearly enters into the Incidence of Taxation.

This Born Ruler of His Species (*de l'Avenir*) perceives no derogation from His Sublimity in the exercise of the strictest economy, and in an attention to points of commercial detail, of which prior Rulers of their Species, at present perceptible, if at all, in a less awful form, unwisely neglected cognisance. How proud and how trusting ought the Humble and Obligated Ratepayer to be whose destinies are to be controlled by such a Financier and His friends. For His faithful and loving subjects may be sure beforehand, that the Coming will entertain the same paternal solicitude for their property that He does for His own. Let them fold their vassal hands accordingly, and be thankful. Let them not lift their plebeian voices, if He—*Nemo Imperator et Rex*—keeps His august grip on the lands for which He has honoured them by taking their unworthy money. It is His unique privilege to eat the pudding, and have it too.

His Majesty *in posse* has hinted to a private friend (but this, again, is strictly confidential), that He shall regard it as His duty, as the Father of His People, to rescind all raw legislative attempts of the nature of Reform Bills and Acts of Settlement, with Habeas Corpus and Trial by Jury. He is said to entertain rather sorrowful misgivings about the utility (to Him) of Magna Charta. He considers *His Præsum, ut prosum* an excellent motto. But He will take into His exalted consideration the continuance of leave to His subjects to participate in inhaling His royal and imperial oxygen during His royal and imperial pleasure.

His Sacred and Gracious Majesty (to anticipate a little) is in feeling an Utilitarian, and while he advocates the removal (as aforesaid) of certain hampering and vexatious restrictions on His Royal and Imperial Prerogative, He is a Liberal in politics. His thoroughly practical temperament is happily illustrated by His anxiety for the expansion of the Revenue by the development of supplementary fiscal charges. He sees how the Licensing System might be extended with the most salutary results to all individuals who, for their own selfish amusement, pursue sterile callings and fantastic inquiries, to the obvious prejudice of their fellow-creatures. In His financial programme a heavy duty on unsuccessful books, payable by the authors, is an item which will meet with universal approbation, and may be expected to increase from year to year. There, too, it is laid down that no man shall write poetry without a permit, unless he be of the degree

## NEMO

of a Baron, or unless he can explain to the satisfaction of the Excise the meaning of what he has written. Out of these and sundry other equally novel and intelligent fountains of income it will be a positive gratification to all properly disposed persons to see certain offshoots of the Nemo Gens comfortably pensioned; an exquisite cargo (if the expression be allowable) of Serene (yet a trifle or so supercilious) Cousins of both genders, whose revenues do not at present (to the shame of all true-hearted men be it spoken) correspond with the greatness of their birth, the antiquity of their lineage, and the value of their services.

NOTHING is the tried dependent of NOBODY. They are warmly attached to each other. They are, in reality, near relations. When Mister Nobody is crowned under the title of Nemo I., very large estates will come to Nothing; and in anticipation of so grand a climax as the accession of the Nemoidæ, people have long cultivated with assiduity the acquaintance of Nothing, and have paid him extraordinary court. His praises have been repeatedly celebrated in print. Persons have composed volumes in his special honour, have written treatises, of which he was the exclusive subject-matter, have given to the world poems, of which he was the only hero, the unique Contents.

*I, et benedicito, de Nihilo Tractatulus, fecundior Nilo!*

THE END

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# MAN

CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO

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BY W. CAREW HAZLITT

OF THE INNER TEMPLE

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## CONTENTS

### CHAP.

- I. THE PURPOSE AND THE SCOPE.
- II. SOCIETY IN TOWN AND COUNTRY.
- III. THE WORLD AND THE CHURCH.
- IV. SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES.
- V. THE FOUR TOLL-BARS.
- VI. REVELATION. PRAYER. FAITH. FASTING. REVIVALISM.
- VII. CLERICAL AUXILIARY INSTITUTIONS.
- VIII. THE MEDICINE-MAN AND *Dei Gratia*.
- IX. MONASTICISM AND LATER TEACHERS—WHAT CHRISTIANITY IS.
- X. THE BIBLE, OR HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITES.
- XI. THE BIBLE, OR HISTORY OF THE ISRAELITES (*cont.*).
- XII. THE NEW TESTAMENT.
- XIII. THE NEW TESTAMENT (*cont.*).
- XIV. AUTONOMY OF THE UNIVERSE.
- XV. FREE WILL AND PREDESTINATION.

### CHAP.

- XVI. NATURAL HISTORY.
- XVII. A FUTURE STATE.
- XVIII. A FUTURE STATE (*cont.*).
- XIX. ORIGIN OF MAN.
- XX. EVOLUTION.
- XXI. THE BLOOD.
- XXII. THE BRAIN.
- XXIII. THE SOUL.
- XXIV. HEAVEN AND HELL.
- XXV. ETERNAL PUNISHMENT. PURGATORY. THE DEVIL.
- XXVI. KNOW-NOTHINGNESS.
- XXVII. LIBERATION.
- XXVIII. THE ASTRONOMER AND GEOLOGIST.
- XXIX. THE ASTRONOMER AND GEOLOGIST (*cont.*).
- XXX. OTHER LESSONS OF SCIENCE.
- XXXI. CHEMISTRY. GEOGRAPHY. CHRONOLOGY.
- XXXII. THE WHOLE SUBJECT SURVEYED.
- XXXIII. CONCLUSION.
- INDEX.

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